



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

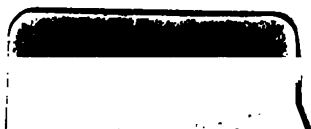
About Google Book Search

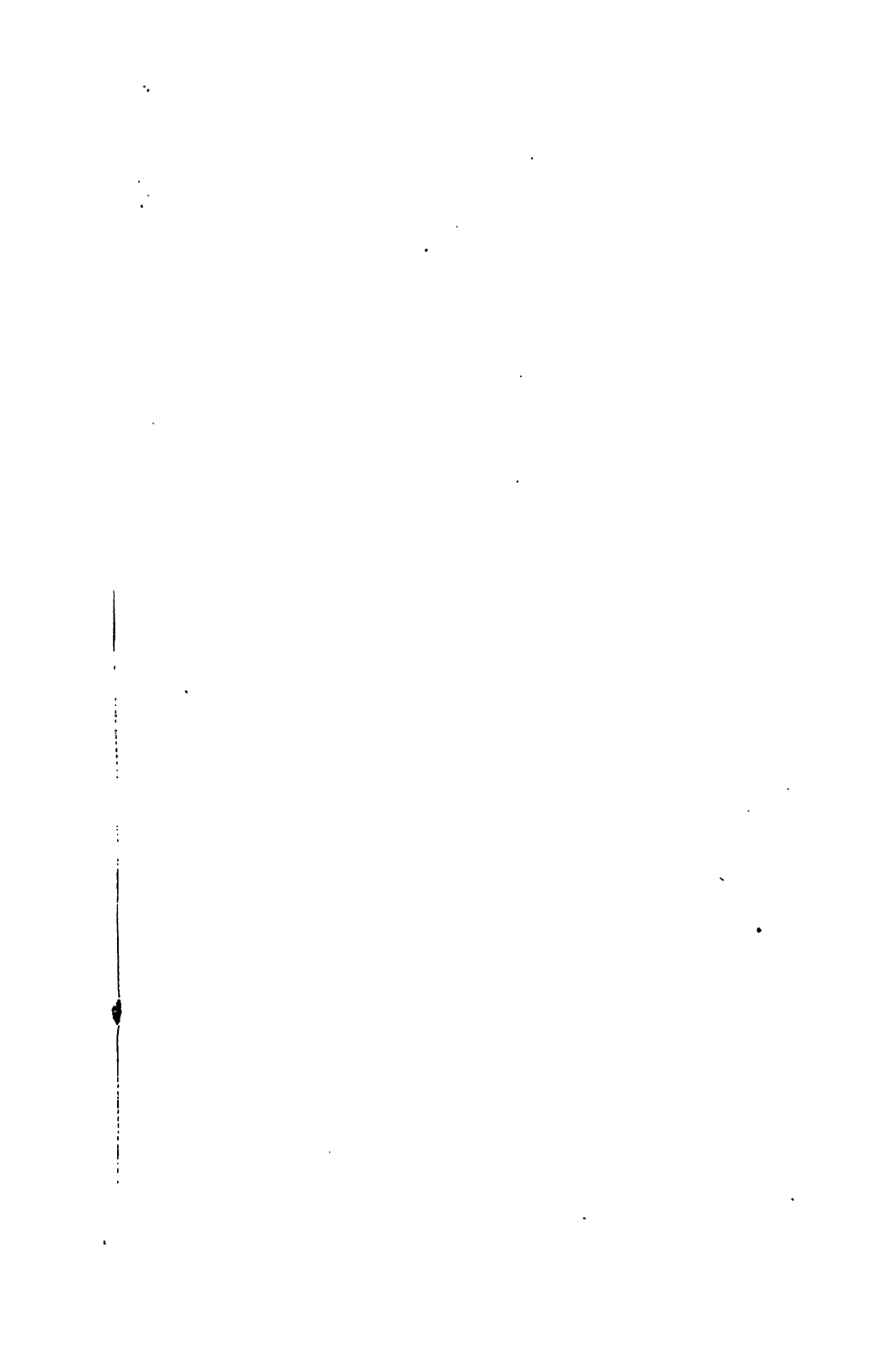
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600053035M







ANNE SHERWOOD:

OR, THE

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS OF ENGLAND.

" Il faut ôter les masques des choses, aussi bien que des personnes!"

MONTAIGNE.

" Per me si va nella città dolente:
Per me si va nell' eterno dolore:
Per me si va tra la perduta gente."—DANTE.

" Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud."—Ps. cxxiii., *Bible Version*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1857.

249. v. 96.

LONDON:
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS, CHANCERY STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.



ANNE SHERWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER reading Lord Claude's letter, the joyous light which had illuminated Annie's face died away, and she remained for a long time in a melancholy attitude, resting her head upon her hand. She saw indeed that Claude loved her, but she saw too that he had not courage for her sake to brave the world's opinion. Still the family pride, against which her mind would have revolted in any other person, in Claude excited neither anger nor indignation. Her partial fondness would not even allow her to qualify that pride as weakness, and she even went so far as to think it would be a derogation of his dignity

to stoop to her. Never had Annie been so humble in her own eyes ; she forgot, utterly forgot her fond dream, that successful genius might one day level the distinction between her noble lover and herself, and again and again she accused herself of madness and presumption. "And his love," she murmured, "is a fatal accident for Claude, but for me—for me it is the crown of existence, even though it be destined to perish in the furnace of affliction. To be loved by Claude one day—one hour—might well be bought by years of suffering !"

Again and again the letter was read, and Annie pondered over Claude's remarks on Oswald ; "he was too contemptibly weak to make his own happiness, in defiance of a world which could offer him nothing in exchange for the felicity he sacrificed on her tinselled altars !" When Claude wrote that, he meant to return to Annie ; two months later, he remembered the gulf which separated them, and, perhaps, his already cooled passion made it easy for him to avoid one whose love would degrade him. "But he may change

again!" repeated Annie, "he may change again, he may yet return! Ah, shall I then have courage and strength to surmount or conceal my weakness, and show him that I too have pride? But what has pride to do with love? I will delay my departure; perhaps we may meet again—if we do, he shall see by my untroubled look that I am indifferent to him! Oh, that I were! Yet, no! Still let me love one so worthy of devotion. I will stay, and if he comes I can at least assure myself of his health; of that he says nothing! How little he knows the tortures of suspense I have suffered, while uncertain of his state! Ah, if he were like Richard! but no, I would not have him anything but what he is, that 'one bright, particular star' that I have dreamt of so long, nay, all my life, but never saw, till I knew Claude! the star to which I may look up with fond, yet unobserved idolatry! I wish Sydney were home; then I should at least, sometimes, hear his name pronounced: it is very sad never to hear him named!"

Soon after, Sydney came home for his

holidays; but Annie was in low spirits, not at all entertaining, and he rather avoided than sought her company; when obliged to be with her, he behaved with as haughty an air as he could assume, for despite the rough usage of a public school, and a well-merited chastisement from a merchant's son, whom he had taken occasion to remind of his rank, Sydney still retained a thorough consciousness of his own position in life.

Annie expected little from Sydney, but still the boy's callousness cut her to the heart. Lady Adelaide was positively becoming ill-humoured, despite the value she set on her charms, and her knowledge that bad temper would indubitably diminish, if not quite efface them. To describe the miseries she laboured to inflict on her dependant would be a futile attempt, and a weariness to the reader. Sometimes they were small, very small indeed, like the tiny insect's sting, or the mote that enters the eye, and though so minute, often tortures that sensitive organ past enduring. And Annie might have escaped from all this, to the haven of peace her sister's

home offered ; but “ perhaps he will return ! ” whispered to herself, in the lowest murmur, still held her captive in that hardest of bondages.

Ellen’s disappointment on learning Annie’s decision was very great, so was her surprise. Richard expressed no astonishment. “ Lord Claude Douglas is the magnet ! ” said he. “ But he is in the East, you know,” said Ellen ; “ we read a paragraph in the paper about him the other day.”

“ Never mind, he will return, or Annie hopes he will. But I can’t help wishing she would try to banish him from her mind ! ”

“ That she never will,” said Ellen ; “ if she loves him, it will be for ever. My poor dear Annie ! Oh, Richard dearest, what shall we do ? ”

“ We cannot do anything, dear love, but commend our sister to our heavenly Father’s care and guidance ! ”

* * * * *

A new year had come, and with it the realization of the most ambitious dream that had ever lit the life of an obscure woman.

Annie Sherwood "awoke one morning and found herself a celebrity!" Not only had her work succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectation she could have formed, but yet more, the creation of her fancy had won the plaudits of master-minds, whose praises were indeed a triumph. "What would Claude say? what would Claude think?" He was never Lord Claude Douglas in Annie's memory; the name was so much sweeter in its simple southern sound, *Claude!* But long months, long weary months rolled away, and suns rose and set, and still he did not come, nor did any tidings of him greet her expectant ear. He had forgotten his foolish dream, or he was ashamed of having loved his inferior—which? He was living, and in improved health, the papers had told that much. What heart-sickening days were those to Annie Sherwood! Yet was she in a measure sustained by her growing, though anonymous reputation, and already a second work was about to build it higher.

What a triumph it would be, when once she should rend the veil, and show that the

pen whose eloquent words had made so many hearts thrill, had been guided by the hand of the despised dependent of the great and proud! Sometimes Annie saw her darling offspring, for such it was to her, in the hands of the cold-hearted Adelaide, and eliciting even from her expressions of admiration. Sometimes, too, she heard the choicest passages read aloud by the cracked, croaking voice of Miss Dobson, who was marvelling what people could find to attract them in such trash; she was sure it was not to be compared to *Fatherless Fanny*, which had been the favourite novel of her youth; of course, Miss Dobson's criticisms greatly moderated the young author's exultation! It was June, already leafy June; "I will wait three months more—yes, three months more!" repeated Annie. At the end of three months the Curzons would be returning to England.

It was not only June, but the anniversary of England's proudest day, Waterloo. Lady Adelaide had some friends staying with her. She had accompanied them to Waterloo. Walter and Herbert had been indulged with

a holiday, and had been allowed to go also. Of course the governess was left at home; she saw the gay, laughing party set out in the luxurious carriage; there were happy smiles on all their faces, except that of Adelaide.

Annie did not envy them their smiles and their brave array, but she did sigh once or twice, as she thought of the rustling leaves and the pleasant breeze in the green woods through which they would pass, and she sat for a while, leaning her head upon her hand, and thinking of Napoleon. Travelling back from Waterloo to the battle of the Pyramids, she was in the East, and soon the eagle of war was driven from her mental vision, and in its place rose the form of a traveller in the far-off desert. He sat under a palm-tree in an oasis, and had adopted, as travellers often do, the habit of an oriental; his dark speaking face became that habit well. Round him were grouped his Eastern and European attendants, and as he was stretched on the sands till the heat of day was past, he was reading, perhaps *Hafiz*, perhaps *Zadig*, the

exquisite tale which Claude's own countryman had clothed with all the rich imagery of an oriental story-teller.

Suddenly Annie started up, with an irresistible inclination to go forth from the busy haunts of men, and to spend two or three hours alone in the green wood, if she could find her way thither alone. She would take Claude's letter with her, and read and re-read it—perhaps she might find out some hitherto-hidden meaning in its pages. Poor dreamer!

Having hastily prepared for her excursion, Annie told a servant whom she saw when passing out, that she would be absent several hours, and would require no dinner. When the door had closed—indeed, before it had well closed—the servant in question hastened to inform the housemaid, that “there certainly was something very queer about Miss Sherwood. What business could she possibly have out? His opinion was, that she was going to meet that old rake of a Colonel. He had been past that morning, and had looked up at the school-room window; no

good would come of it," &c. The housemaid, while arranging her ribbons at a glass, quite agreed with Thomas; but still, though she agreed about Miss Sherwood, "the Colonel was a pleasant gentleman, and had pleasant ways with him. He had given her once five shillings only to carry a bit of a note to Miss Sherwood."

"Why, you good-for-nothing girl!" interrupted the cook, who had received many an act of kindness from Annie, "how dare you try to take away the poor thing's name like that? Don't you know well enough she never read a word of the note, but quite indignant-like bid you carry it back again? and instead of giving it to the old villain again, didn't you sit down in this blessed kitchen, and read every word of it?"

"At all events, I've seen her cast sheep's eyes at him," said the discomfited Susan.

"Very true," said the footman.

"Hold your tongue, you bad fellow! If you weren't good-for-nothing yourself, you wouldn't be so ready to talk against innocent people—it only shows how bad you are."

"Well, I tell you 'gov'nisses' is a bad set!" replied Thomas, "though most of them's demure. Pray, didn't she stay out one night till it struck nine o'clock?"

"More shame of my lady to send her!"

"My lady didn't send her."

"But I know she did, Thomas."

"But cook, didn't I hear my lady telling Mr. Curzon that Miss Sherwood would go roaming about evenings, and it wasn't respectable of her, and my lady hadn't a doubt but that she'd come to no good. Ah, didn't I hear that with my own ears?"

"More shame for them that said it—more shame for one woman that speaks ill of another with no cause. A great lady has no more right to talk scandal than another. I'll trouble you to give me no more of your empty discourse, Thomas: and as for you, Susan, if I hear any more of that old sinner's doings with you, I'll make a 'pint' of telling Mr. Curzon—that I will!"

"We shall see," said Susan, scornfully tossing her curls, for housemaids may wear curls, though governesses may not. "We

shall see whether master'll believe you or me!"

"Yes, we shall see!" said the cook, with that decided tone which cooks usually acquire, even cooks of the gentlest hearts.

Meanwhile, the object of the foregoing remarks, all unconscious of the attention she had excited, pursued her way, and crossing the Boulevard, hastily passed through one of the gates, as though she would feel more at ease when the city of pleasure and luxury was left behind. Unconscious of time as it passed, unconscious of the distance she was traversing, Annie did not remember that several miles separated her from the city, when the murmuring breeze of the "Bois de la Cambre" invited her further onward.

How beautiful those green alleys are, carpeted with emerald turf, walled and almost canopied with grand forest trees! No human sound to mar the scene, no sound at all, but the gentlest of all summer breezes, lifting the leaves, and making murmuring music. Truly the wood was a paradise to the poor governess, who came from a dingy school-room, and she sat down on the green grass

in a little recess, and drawing forth Claude's letter, spread it on her knee, and read a few sentences and wept—read again, and again wept. But her tears were not all bitter, and she looked up at the glimpses of blue sky above the dark trees, and blessed Him that made her that she had lived and loved! Whatever the veiled future had in store for her, had she not lived and loved?

And while thus she thought, a radiant smile burst through the cloud of her tears, and she breathed the name so inexpressibly dear to her. And even while, in her supposed solitude, she was calling on her lover's name, some one came forth from a neighbouring alley, and uttering a joyful cry, Annie darted forward, and hid her face in the arms that were opened to receive her. Everything was forgotten, but the one blissful thought, "Claude is with me again! he loves me! he loves me! Earth can give me no more!" She was unconscious, totally unconscious of the impassioned words that were addressed to her—unconscious that her glowing cheek had been raised from its hiding-place, and

that her Claude was reading half her love in her eyes—all he could not read—unconscious that he was again pressing down her eyelids with kisses, only interrupted by fond-murmured words in the soft southern speech of his mother's native land. No, she knew nothing—understood nothing—but “Claude has come back to me!—he loves me!” and in that one idea centred the universe of Annie Sherwood. Claude was the first to wake, for he too had been in a blissful dream—so blissful that he had forgotten who he was, and had been surprised into declaring a passion he had intended to crush and annihilate. When he recalled his scattered senses, a sigh escaped his bosom. “You sigh! You are then sad, my Lord!” said Annie, timidly, and disengaging herself from his embrace. “Sad! no, indeed, dearest! why should I be? But call me Claude; let me be Claude, and nothing else to you. It was that murmured word that revealed you to me just now, like another wood nymph!” he added, smiling, but not with his old, gay, happy smile. “But

you should not have wandered to this solitude alone," he added, more gravely. "Alone! Am I not always alone?" said Annie; "but I did not think—I did not know—that I was doing wrong;" and Annie spoke with that child-like timidity which steals over the manner even of the most high-spirited woman, in the presence of the man she loves, directly he has won from her the secret of her heart. "I have been very sad and lonely lately," she added, "and to-day all the Curzons had gone to Waterloo; I was quite alone, and I did so long to escape to this green wood and read, but I will go back directly if you think that I ought."

"*Pauvre enfant*," murmured Claude, abstractedly, as he swept the mass of dark hair off Annie's forehead, and gazed long and earnestly in her face.

"Shall I go now?" she asked.

"Not yet, not yet," he answered quickly; "it is a coward thought, that makes us fear the world's envious tongue!" So saying, he led Annie back into the green recess, and

made her sit down beside him, while clasping both her hands in one of his, he again forgot the gulf between him and the poor dependant, and she utterly forgot his own sage reproof for her lonely wanderings in the green wood—forgot what the world might say of her for sitting there with Lord Claude, when the evening shadows were soon going to fall, and one herald star had already risen. No wonder Annie forgot; she trusted so entirely to Claude.—Could he be wrong? Impossible! “You came to read,” said Claude, “but the book—where is it? I do not see your book! Was it the clouds—the leaves, you came all this weary way to read?” “No, indeed!” But so low was the answer, that none but love’s ear could have heard it. “Show me your book,” repeated Claude. But Annie had none to show; and at last, blushing, trembling, as if caught in a guilty action, she showed him his own letter, which he would have taken from her, only that she wept at the thought of parting with it.

“Our unexpected meeting to-day, Annie,

dearest," said Claude, when they were a little calmer, "has made me think of *Zadig*. Do you remember the part where *Zadig*, after a long weary search for *Astarte*, finds her tracing his name upon the sand? Even so I found you, *ange bien-aimé*, tracing mine upon the viewless winds!"

"If *Zadig* had been a poet," said Annie, "he would have made a thousand songs upon that happy meeting! You thought of *Zadig* in the desert, Claude?"

"Often; and though I could not make 'a thousand songs' upon the lovers' meeting, one night of peculiar beauty, while sitting under a palm, at a little distance from my people (who were grouped round a fire which they had lit, and were chaunting some monotonous but soothing love stanzas), I put together a few verses, such as *Zadig* might have sung—in French, of course, for I have not the pretension to write English poetry."

"Ah, I know they were beautiful!" said Annie.

"No, indeed, not poetry at all," said Claude, smiling fondly on the loving woman

beside him, who thought that all emanating from him must have beauty in it. "They were but the most 'médiocre' verses."

"But you will tell them to me—they must be sweet ; to me, at least, they must be so."

"I have forgotten the first stanza."

"Never mind ; begin at the second."

"Well then, fancy a whole army of asterisks, and after them—

"Au désert j'ai cherché dans les lointains pays,
Par la chaleur du jour, par la fraîcheur des nuits,
Quand l'astre aux mille feux brille en tout son éclat,
Quand la nue a voilé la douce Zoharag.
Ma poitrine exhalant de longs cris de souffrance,
Comme en un froid tombeau, tout est resté silence !

Je t'appelais en vain, lumière de mes yeux—
Toi, plus belle cent fois que le soleil des cieux !
J'essayais de chanter pour tromper ma souffrance ;
Mon cœur était flétri, réduit à l'impuissance,
Ma bouche ne voulait que redire toujours,
Oh, reviens Astarté ! oh, reviens mes amours !"

"Beautiful, most beautiful," said Annie.

"Ah, you think so because your heart listens, and not your mind," said Claude ;
"otherwise you would find out all the flaws."
Still he was pleased that the heart should so

listen, and bias the judgment; and Annie stoutly maintained her opinion.

“But did you say nothing for Astarte?” she asked suddenly. “Did you give her heart no voice, while she watched, and waited, and wept?” And as she spoke, Annie looked up for an instant with that loving, yet shrinking look, that a woman wears when she would momentarily read a loved face, while bashful fears strive with the half-formed wish, and press her eyelids down.

“Yes, dearest,” replied Claude, “I did;” adding more gaily—

“‘When a man says, I’ve written fifty rhymes,
He makes you fear he will recite them too!’

I would not betray my infirm verses to any less partial hearer, knowing as I do what they are worth, only springing from a vagrant fancy—that fancy stirred up in boyhood by the sparkling waves of the Mediterranean, and since nurtured by the land of Ossian. This, I thought, might have wandered through the brain of Astarte, while between hope and fear she awaited her lover—

“Ah, maître de ma vie, où donc errent tes pas ?
Mon âme te pleure, comme si le trépas
Avait fauché tes jours ! Où donc es-tu, chère âme ?
Mon front s’est obscurci, mes yeux restent sans flamme.
Mon regard cherche en vain la lumière du ciel ;
Et je ne le vois plus, c’était toi le soleil !

Lorsque l’aube du jour dissipe la vapeur,
Quand tout sur cette terre a repris sa couleur,
De tes traits en mon cœur restent la douce image ;
Et l’astre de la nuit souvent sur mon visage
Voit couler bien des pleurs ; c’est ton seul souvenir
Qui, brulant dans mon cœur, m’empêche de mourir.

Oh ! cher Zadig, reviens ! ma jeunesse est flétrie—
Tout me semble mourir, la fleur penche sans vie,
La feuille se sèche, l’oiseau cesse son chant ;
Comme oiseau, feuille et fleur, mon cœur s’en va mourant.
Mais si tu revenais, oh ! trésor de mon âme,
Tout renaitrait, l’oiseau, feuille, fleur et”——

I forget the rest, Annie.” And Claude smiled yet more fondly on his eager listener, and wondered if the great singers—the geniuses whose words have made immortal music—the Dantes—the Miltons—the Shakespeares—ever had more rapt listeners than love had made for his trifling verses. “But we must go now, my precious one,” said he ; “we must leave this, our leafy paradise, and go back to the world !”

"Yes, we must go!" responded Annie, with an answering sigh, while a prophetic tear trembled in her eye, and seemed to say, "Such a sun will never rise again for you as rose this summer morning."

"A tear!" said Claude, in his low, musical voice. "What if we must go forth from our Eden to-day, my beloved? there stands no cherub at the entrance, with a flaming sword, to bar our return! But I cannot go till I have left some memorial of this the happiest day of my life!"

"Is it really, really such?" asked Annie, with a troubled joy.

"Really and truly," responded Claude, kissing her cheek, "for to-day I have realized the dream of my life!" And while he spoke, he began with a firm, strong hand to cut Annie's name, or rather the initials of her name, on the bark of a tree. "How often I shall return here!" said Claude.

"You will add your own?" said Annie.

"Must I?"

"Oh, yes! do, do!"

Claude began to carve the initials of his

name beside those of Annie Sherwood, but the tree was unusually hard: the impetus which had made his arm move at first now failed; and ere the character was half formed, he threw down the knife, and gave up the attempt. Annie sighed deeply. She did not ask him to renew his efforts, but the failure struck on her heart as an omen.

At that moment a number of those dark sinister-looking rooks winged their dull flight above the lovers' heads, uttering discordant cries, and two priests came up the green alley of the woods, in their long black soutanes. Annie involuntarily shuddered; and when Claude questioned her tenderly, she only replied by pointing to the melancholy flight of birds that darkened the sky. Like all the children of imagination, she was superstitious; and Claude, like a true Southerner, shared her feeling. Both saw an evil omen in those black-winged birds, and in the dark-robed priests, cut off from all life's joy, but left unsheltered from its storms and misery.

"What can they be doing here?" said Annie, meaning the priests.

"And we! what do we here? What strange destiny brought us to this spot to-day?" muttered Claude to himself, a shadow sweeping over his expressive features. "Forgive me, Annie dearest!" he added, with earnest gravity.

"Forgive you! what have I to forgive?"

"Much; I have been selfishly preferring my own gratification to your welfare. I have been very wrong to make you linger here. Let us hasten!" So saying, he led Annie quickly through the green wood, that now seemed shorn of half its beauty. Silently they walked on, hand clasped in hand, till they came to the spot where the wood terminates in the common highway. There instinctively each turned to look back. "Such hours come but once in life!" said Claude, mournfully.

"Like the snow-flakes in the river,
One moment white, then lost for ever!"

"Lost for ever!" repeated Annie, unconsciously, as she left the green shade

which had been to her as the gate of Eden,
an ingress to that "*Vita nuova*," the

"——— all

That Eve has left her daughters since the fall!"

that "*Vita nuova*," that none can know
till they have loved.

* * * * *

In her dreams that night, Annie was alternately blissful and wretched,—now rising to the purest height of joy, the brightest heaven mortality can reach; then thrust down, down for ever, sinking lower and lower, like the lost spirits of whom the poet tells,—the lost spirits who strive to regain, and almost do regain, a forfeited heaven; and while hovering on the brink of the Empyrean, are hurled back by shooting stars to the abyss of misery. Yes, Annie's dreams were troubled; yet how sweet, how happy was the first waking thought! "It is all, all true. I have not dreamt it! Claude has returned, and he loves me! Oh, yes, he loves me! His love is the crown of my life! Nothing can dim my radiant joy,—nothing can take it from me but death!

Nor can death! love is immortal, if the soul
be! Nothing can take his love from me."

* * * * *

Let us turn from the clinging woman's
tender reveries and dreams,—from her who
has forgotten or despised every adverse wind
that fortune has blown on her defenceless
head, in the fulness of her present happi-
ness; let us turn from her, to her noble
lover. Claude Douglas spends not the night
in chequered dreams; no, he paces his rich
chamber, whose downy couch vainly invites
him to repose, in a conflict of contending
passions—love, pity, honour; every generous
passion that can ennoble the soul of man,
ranged against one dark-browed fiend,
pride; and that fiend strives with them all,
as though it would strangle every virtue,
trampling them beneath its relentless feet,
while still it holds its brow shamelessly erect
before that heaven, whose representatives it
dares with impious rage to crush! Can the
proud son of one of England's noblest houses
wed her who has received the hireling's
wages! eaten the dependant's bread! waited

upon the nod—obeyed the mandate of his inferiors? Impossible! Again, can he break the tender heart that loves him devotedly; and in breaking that heart, annihilate his own happiness for ever? No, no! Still less can he dishonour the being whom he would have pure as the inmost thought of an angel. Pride must yield, love conquer. Annie should never know that he had doubted, wavered for a minute. They would be all in all to each other. They would live above the world. He would bear her to his mother's land, or to a home in the far, free West, where the great in mind, and the great in soul, are the only nobles! And Claude repeated—

“What lost a world, and bade a hero fly?
The timid tear in Cleopatra's eye!
Yet be the soft triumvir's fault forgiven;
By this how many lose, not earth, but heaven!”

CHAPTER II.

THE next time that Annie and Lord Claude met, was in the gay promenade of the park. He joined her immediately, or at least walked beside the children, as he had been accustomed to do formerly. His manner, though tender and affectionate, was constrained, and his expressive eye full of melancholy. Albeit the most charming of men, Lord Claude Douglas was pre-eminently irresolute, and already the vision of living for love in the sweet South, or the free Transatlantic world, had dissolved, and, "like the baseless fabric of 'all' visions," had left "no wreck behind;" like Aladdin's palace, when his imperial father-in-law sought it in the morning, "The place thereof knew it no more!" The return of Claude's doubts and fears bringing with them the shadow of that huge, overwhelming monster the world, had plunged

him into the most painful state of mind. Happily for Annie, love had lulled her usually quick powers of perception into a deep sleep. She saw no clouds in her sky, not even the small cloud "big as a man's hand;" and if she had seen it, she would have refused to believe its evidence. No, neither doubt nor fear had she; "perfect love casteth out fear" in the heart's natural affections, equally as in its religious belief. Claude Douglas sometimes looked earnestly in her speaking face, and read there, as in an open book, her blind confidence in him; and as he read, though he was gratified, his spirit grew more and more troubled. Had Annie's love been more ambitious, and less sentimental; had it been her lover's title and position which dazzled and held her in bondage, instead of the charms of his heart and mind,—she would have understood him, and perhaps latent pride taking the alarm, she might have had resolution enough to turn away from a love, gained more by resistless destiny, than given as a free-will offering.

After a long conversation, embarrassing from irresolution on the one side and timidity on the other, Lord Claude asked Annie abruptly, what her plans for the future were? Annie started a little, but only momentarily; of course Claude only meant about resigning her present disagreeable employment. "I shall leave the Curzons in September," said she; "about that time they will be returning to England."

"And you?" asked Claude.

"I shall go direct to my sister's," she replied; adding ingenuously, "We shall meet again, at Ellen's. I do so want you to know Ellen and her husband."

Claude sighed, but made no reply. What could he be thinking of? Ah! it was a sigh of pleasure. His kind heart was rejoicing over Annie's coming emancipation; she was quite sure of that. "I wrote a long letter to Ellen, last night," continued Annie, colouring deeply; "I was so anxious to tell her all about you, and our strange meeting, and——"

"But I would rather you should not tell

—I mean, not now—not yet,” began Claude, hastily.

“You would rather I should not tell Ellen!” exclaimed Annie, with some surprise.

“No, dearest,” answered Claude, “not till ——” The sentence remained incomplete, even in his own mind; how could he complete it while his views were still so vacillating? Annie was disappointed, and even a little troubled; she wanted so much to pour some of her overflowing happiness into the gentle heart of her loving Ellen. Who could sympathize, who rejoice with her as her sister would, and next to her, her true-hearted, affectionate brother Richard? But Claude must have some very strong reasons for his wish; no doubt it was to give Ellen a happy surprise later: he was sure to be acting for the best, so Annie grew soon contented, and when she went home, burnt the long letter she had written to Ellen.

For some time Lord Claude contented himself with meeting Annie, as he had done that day, during her walks with the children,

and they were usually taken in the park, or on the Boulevard. His old, intimate visits to the school-room were not renewed, though he was an occasional visitor of the Curzons' drawing-room. Annie thanked her noble lover in her heart, for the delicacy and considerate kindness which, she doubted not, dictated the line of conduct he had adopted, and only loved him the more enthusiastically, as his apparent honour rose more highly in her dazzled imagination.

When the lovers met, though the tenderness of Claude's tone and look threw a charm over every word he uttered, their conversation was confined to the discussion of those intellectual and imaginative topics, which had appeared their bond of union before they became declared lovers; another proof, if one were wanting, of the refinement which guided all the actions of Claude Douglas. Poor Annie! it was well she thought so, though the motives and intentions she had ascribed to Claude existed only in her own fertile and partial imagination.

Probably Claude Douglas had no more

thought of wronging or afflicting Annie Sherwood, than he had of overthrowing the monarchy of England. He was in some things very unaccustomed to the ways of the world, though he had lived thirty-one years in it. Those years had been spent in a dream of poetry, rather than in the practical usages of life. Had he been a thoroughly heartless man of the world, the position in which he had placed himself would not only have appeared easy to withdraw from, but rather an amusing "*petit embarras*" than a serious dilemma. But as it was, he saw himself in a labyrinth from which there was a very difficult egress, if any at all. In vain he repeated to himself that adverse destiny, rather than his own will, had thrown him in the way of Annie Sherwood, when he had fully resolved to pass through Brussels without seeing her. Whatever had occasioned their meeting, they had met, the how was immaterial, and he had been surprised into a mad declaration, of which he already repented. Some years, if not a life, of painful regret lay before him, and not him alone,

but the woman whom he loved—yes, loved most fondly, only not well enough to bear the oppressive mockery of the heartless, on her account.

At length he resolved on leaving Brussels, and leaving Annie; in a day or two he would put his resolve into execution. He would, when leaving, write and tell her,—tell her what? He knew not, and could not bear to think. But the day or two never expired, and growing more and more enchained by charms which he never could describe—the charms of a woman neither very beautiful, nor still very young, he let his resolves melt away like snow-flakes, formed no more, and finally, with a spirit which in another man he would have condemned and despised, gave himself up entirely to the fascination of the present moment, turning away from the veiled future as though it could have disclosed the head of a Medusa.

Claude was indeed cautious not to draw disagreeable observation on Annie, so cautious that none ever suspected the tie which bound them to each other. He had no longer

any intentions whatever with regard to her, no views honourable or dishonourable, unless to enjoy her society as long as he could, and to win her heart if possible, more irrevocably than it was won at present! By turns joyous and depressed, there were moments when Claude's manner assumed a kind of reckless gaiety and *laissezaller*, which gave Annie a vague uneasiness, which she could not understand, but made her view with delight any return to a more serious mood. As for Annie's previsions, they were scarcely, if at all, deeper than those of her lover. Still very young in heart and fancy, if not in years, she had all the simplicity of a girl, and was as happy and contented as though the coronet of the Dryburghs were already circling her brow. She was so inexpressibly happy in feeling herself beloved by Claude, that her heart asked no more, unless it were that Ellen might share her bliss, by knowing its extent. As for the puerile pleasure of parading her conquest before the envious or indifferent, she never thought of it; and if she pictured to herself a life spent

as the chosen companion of him she loved, it was only as the wife of Claude, never as the Lady Claude Douglas, to be one day Marchioness of Dryburgh. If she remembered Claude's rank and position at all, it was only to wish with Portia, that she could become worthier of her noble lover.

Ah! what a blessed dream it seemed to ponder over the day when Claude, having loved her, and made her his own, solely for herself, unadorned, as she knew herself to be, with the trappings of beauty, rank, or wealth, when his disinterested love should have given her all, to reveal herself to him as the mysterious Egeria, whose genius had made the pulses of so many hearts stir with delight and admiration, and whose anonymous reputation had become as a household word in every gifted or intellectual mind! But not yet, not yet; let the generous, the noble sacrifice be completed, before Claude knew that his loving Annie held so high a place in the self-created nobility of genius.

Meanwhile, Annie wrote to Ellen, of course not telling the nature of her joy, for

to obey Claude seemed as binding as a religious duty, but dimly shadowing forth to her the coming revelation of so full and perfect a happiness, that she wanted time to become accustomed to its brightness herself.

Ellen, simple Ellen, took all this in sober earnest, and felt quite sure that her exulting hopes for her beloved sister were about to be accomplished; and if Richard shook his head never so little with a doubting air, poor Ellen grew quite as angry as it was possible for her to grow, with the doubt which the little shake of the head implied. Her early admiration of and full confidence in her sister's charms were as strong,—nay, probably stronger than ever; and had it been announced to her that Annie had captivated a crowned head, it would not have appeared to her the least absurd or improbable.

"I told you so! I told you so, Richard!" exclaimed Ellen, triumphantly, running into her husband's study, her eyes radiant with delight, and a newspaper in her hand.

"You told me, Ellen, that there was to be

a meeting in Bath next Thursday for the suppression of——”

“That has nothing to do with it, nothing in the world. Look here, dearest, look; listen, I mean. ‘Lord Claude Douglas has returned from his Eastern wanderings, and is, we understand, sojourning in Brussels. It is rumoured that his Lordship is likely to be married in October.’”

“So says the newspaper, Ellen; but what is that to us?”

“Everything! he is going to marry Annie.”

“Dearest Ellen, pray don’t prepare disappointment for yourself.”

“I am not, Richard,” said Ellen, looking a little mortified; “but this account so exactly corresponds with much that Annie says, even in point of time. Does she not tell us that next September she will be the happiest of the happy? so happy, that she cannot contemplate her own coming bliss without trembling. Yes, I shall see Annie Lady Claude Douglas, and those who have dared to treat her as an inferior will have

to bend to her. What will the Doctor say, Richard?"

"The Doctor? If your day-dreams are true, the Doctor will break his heart!"

"Will he not rejoice with us?"

"No; he loves Annie, and an old man's love is as strong as it is usually hopeless."

CHAPTER III.

It was the latter end of September, and ere the glories of an unusually bright summer had become memories, the little nation of the "Belges" was preparing to astonish herself and her neighbours by a pageant of extraordinary splendour, in commemoration of Belgium's successful struggle to throw off the ungenial yoke of the House of Orange.

A grand procession was to take place, arranged with lavish splendour, and emblematical of all the past, present, and future glories, in arts, arms, and commerce, of the infant kingdom. Very gorgeous, indeed, it would be—very effective, and somewhat theatrical; there would be gilded and painted cars, banners of every hue and texture, and rose-crowned maidens *ad infinitum*, who would all look pretty and nymph-like in the dis-

tance ; in fact, the programme was as nearly French as anything Belge could be.

Besides all these daylight displays, there were to be, during the evenings of the three grand days, balls, concerts, &c.; and to crown all, illuminations, which would make the Chinese Feast of Lanterns seem, by comparison, like a foggy December evening in the midst of London.

The Curzons had gone away for the three days that the festival would last. Lady Adelaide would not sanction sight-seeing, even by her presence. She had taken with her the hopeful scions of the house of Curzon. The governess she could not take : of course she could not go in the carriage with her Ladyship, and Dobbie was to have the seat by the coachman. The governess must be left to her own devices ;—how happy she was to be so left ! She did not now feel the loneliness of her situation : how could she, when each bright thought that rose in her heart was happier than the last ? What was the oppressive yoke of the governess to her now ? the yoke that was so soon to be broken

for ever—that had grown even easy to bear since Claude's love had made an Eden of her life's wilderness !

Annie thought over the way in which she had spent her last brief holiday only three months before, in leafy June, in the midst of the green wood ! it had been the brightest of her life. This day would not be so spent ; Claude had gently reproved her for her solitary rambles ; he had thought the indulgence at least imprudent ; she could not even wish to do what he condemned. And her lonely room was not lonely now ; it was peopled by such lovely images ; and the fond woman smiled to herself at her pleasant dreams, and cared for little beyond the empire of her own fancy.

Annie employed her first leisure hour in stringing together some verses, defective in many ways, but overflowing with the bright imagery that joy imparts, and they sparkled like sunshine upon a dancing river. Then she read over all Claude's letters ; he had written her a great many ; and sometimes she had received them in a volume of poetry,

sometimes in a bouquet that was a letter in itself. Those letters of Claude's were so beautiful, so eloquent—at least Annie thought so—so full of poetry and imagination, fuller still of love; love that formed the rich gold setting to the glittering gems of thought strewn throughout the closely written pages. Then Annie turned from the gentle, loving words Claude had written, to the books he preferred, some of them so grave with deep thought, others so sparkling with wit and merriment. Then she looked out for a moment to see if the shadow of that form which she would know among a thousand, were thrown upon the green alleys of the Park. Yet, how cautiously, and even tremblingly, she looked, lest Claude might see her, and think her capable of levity.

When evening came, and with it a rich stream of melody burst on her ear from the well-trained military bands which perambulated the streets, Annie thought of Claude in the brilliant circle of the court at that hour, the graceful, the proud, grand form, that every eye would follow with envy or admi-

ration. And would Claude remember her there? would he think of her faithfully, lovingly, while surrounded by the daughters of rank and beauty? Yes, yes! she knew he would, and she smiled exultingly. She was right. In the midst of a court ball, and its splendid array of beauty and fashion, Lord Claude well remembered Annie Sherwood — remembered her as we remember the bitter thought from which we vainly try to escape.

Two days of the festival had passed. On the third, Annie stood for a long time—herself, as she hoped and supposed, unseen—watching through the ‘jalousies’ of her own little window, a gentleman seated on a bench in the Park, and apparently absorbed in reading. Now and then he looked up with a quick, hurried glance, as if thinking over a passage he had read, and then appeared to replunge into his book with increased interest. At length he rose abruptly, and walked away in such haste, that the volume he had been reading was left behind. Not long after, a bouquet was brought to Annie, certainly not

among the most beautiful she had received from the noble giver, for it had been hastily chosen; but everything coming from Claude's hand was precious. Lovingly she looked on, and lovingly kissed the tender blossoms, and cautiously untied the ribbon that bound them together; then with eager haste opened the billet which they had been the means of conveying to her. How surprised, and even frightened she looked, when she saw the contents! A few hurried words of entreaty, which only stopped short of a command, that she would meet Lord Claude at the Porte de Namur at three o'clock, "he had something of vital importance to say to her. He knew she was alone, but he had not dared to visit her, lest his doing so should subject her to unpleasant remarks; but if she loved him, she would grant his request; every one was too busy to notice them," &c.

Of course, Claude knew well that he would be obeyed—knew well that his slightest wish was her sovereign law—that if he had but beckoned her over the edge of a precipice,

she would have blindly followed. Yes, he knew it all—knew it too well!

It was true that Annie momentarily remembered the apparent impropriety of the proposed clandestine meeting; but Claude desired—nay, willed it. He was the soul of honour; what he desired and willed must be right. Annie would not hesitate a moment longer.

“Where can Miss Sherwood be gone?” said the footman.

“Oh! to meet her young lover, the Colonel,” said Susan. “Well, it is a great pity some folks hold their heads so high, as if they were the virtuousest of folks! Dear me, only to think how demure she looks all the time! I really wonder at the Colonel’s taste! Why, she hasn’t more colour in her cheeks than a bit of white wall!”

CHAPTER IV.

AT three o'clock a carriage stood at the Porte de Namur, outside, apart from the gay crowds of pleasure-seekers. A gentleman was walking to and fro. Every few minutes he consulted his watch, and turned impatiently to the gate to note who passed out.

A lady approached, dressed entirely in black. Her step was hurried—her breath quickened by agitation—and her usually pale cheek flushed with the deepest crimson. "You are come! All is well! Let us set out!" said Claude, eagerly, as he took her hand.

"For where, my lord?" asked Annie, falteringly.

"Annie, can you not trust me?" said Claude, in a tone of tender reproach. And Annie replied by putting her hand silently into his. He immediately led her to the

carriage, and jumped in after her, muttering,
“*Quelle aveugle confiance !*”

The coachman had evidently previously received directions, for he drove on without orders. Annie dared not ask “to where are you leading me?” so she only whispered to her own heart, “Claude wills it so; it must be right.”

“You tremble, Annie; your eyes are full of tears: do you doubt me?” asked Claude, after a pause.

“Fear you, Claude! No; whom could I trust, if not you?”

“Then why this sadness?”

“I cannot tell. It is involuntary, but I am quite happy.”

“You did not think my request strange? or even—wrong?”

“Oh no, since you made it!”

“*Pauvre enfant !*” murmured Claude, just as he had once before said it. “*Pauvre enfant !*” he repeated, and then relapsed into silence, while he held both those cold, trembling hands in his, and tenderly chafed them to restore warmth.

There was, indeed, a vague fear in Annie's heart—no fear of Claude, no doubt of him—only an unendurable sense of coming evil, dimly shadowed forth, but marching on in silence and certainty.

The lovers sat without speaking, till the carriage stopped at the entrance of the Bois de la Cambre, the green wood where their first vows and promises of love had been exchanged. Annie made no inquiries, unless it were by her timid eye. "To-day must decide the destiny of our lives," said Claude, hurriedly. "Let it be done in the sweet spot where first we talked of love." He assisted his companion to alight, and dismissing the carriage with some directions, which Annie did not hear or notice, returned to her, and taking her passive hand, led her into the green alley in silence, and on, until they reached the well-remembered spot, in which stood the tree, whereon he had carved the initials of Annie Sherwood. "Let us sit down," said he. And Annie silently obeyed; but no word was spoken for some minutes. Then Claude said, abruptly,

“Annie!” She looked up timidly in his face. “Annie, have you dreamt sometimes of ——; have you wished to see Italy—Corinne’s Italy?”

“Oh, so often, Claude! so very often!”

“With me, dearest? with your own Claude?” said he, yet more tenderly folding her in his circling arm. And Annie only replied by happy smiles and blushes; and as he gazed on her admiringly, Claude compared that soul-breathing face with the beauty of the women the world admires, and proudly thought how much hers exceeded. He went on drawing lovely pictures of the land of Dante, of Tasso, and of Petrarch, and of the happy hours they would spend there together, forgetting the world, by the world forgotten. And Annie listened to Claude’s eloquent words, as the devotee would listen to the eloquent priest’s pictures of his dawning Heaven!

While talking of coming joy, Claude was not unmindful of the past trials and sufferings of his beloved. He recounted them with indignant vehemence—spoke of the joy

of her emancipation from the yoke of the cold-hearted Lady Adelaide, whom he despised too much to abhor! "But that bitterness is past—all past," murmured Annie; "long since I cast away such thoughts. I am too happy for resentment—too happy not to be at peace with all the world. But for having borne that yoke I should never have seen you, and should have lived and died without ever having known and loved Claude!"

"Then you would have known and loved a better man, Annie, one who would better have merited your devotion!" said Claude, sadly.

"Never! never!" said Annie, enthusiastically.

"Thanks, dearest one! thanks for all your love!" said Claude, warmly; "thanks for letting me know that love's extent. I believe—nay, I am sure—that it is capable of—of any sacrifice for my happiness."

"Any," said Annie; "any but that of honour!"

"Honour!" repeated Claude, in a doubting

tone; "honour! I long worshipped the divinity the world had set up, and now, now I know it is a false God!"

"Why?" asked Annie's frightened look, for her lips could not frame a question.

"Because it mars our happiness," replied Claude. "I mean it would mar it, could we not learn to live above the cold, heartless world's opinion—to live, dearest, in that Heaven of love, which sees Earth's misty vapours floating beneath its footstool, innoxiously to itself, because they are too gross to enter there!" Claude was looking up at the sky; he did not note the vague shadows which passed over the face that lay nestling in his bosom. He was dreaming: he did not feel the momentary start of the slender form he held imprisoned in his arms: he saw not, as he went on describing the happiness that he and Annie were to enjoy so soon together, in the land of art and romance—he saw not that love and hope and joy, and all that makes woman's life beautiful, were going out, one by one, in Annie's face, like stars that leave a sky of unmingled

cloud behind them, the darker because their light once shone. No ; Claude Douglas saw not this, and he finished by calling on the holy Heaven to witness the eternity of his love, adding, "*I shall never marry.*"

Annie did not start at those words, nor change colour ; no, they had been gradually coming upon her. She did not shrink from Claude's sheltering arms ; no, she lay in them still, quite silent and passive, her head still bent upon the bosom that was to be its pillow of rest through life. She smiled, and her smile looked wondrously bright, and her eyes glittered like jewels through her dark hair, which Claude's hand had dishevelled. "*Es-tu contente ? Es-tu heureuse, mon ange ?*" whispered Claude in his softest voice.

"Oh, yes ! so, so happy !" replied Annie.

"Now, then, all is decided. I knew, I was sure you loved me too well not to be superior to the weakness of——" And here Claude paused : he did not look at Annie ; his brow burst as if on fire, burnt with shame and remorse. He was not a bad man : to

act the villain was new to him ; he must grow accustomed to crime, to endure the aspect of his own evil deeds. Yet he was exulting in his success, triumphing in having won such a devoted love ; but he pitied his victim, and felt a shade of disappointment, to find her less pure than he had dreamed, and willing to accompany his wandering steps with any name short of that of wife. But Claude determined to banish these lingering regrets, and to forget all but their mutual love.

Once, ere they turned and left the wood, the lovers looked back on the spot they had quitted. A moment Claude looked serious, and even sad ; the instant after he laughed with the gaiety of a schoolboy ; then, with all the versatility of a true Frenchman, changing to serious tenderness again, he threw himself on his knees before Annie, and kissing both her hands, fervently swore to devote himself to her happiness for ever. And as Claude there knelt, Annie bent over him, and pressed upon his forehead one long, lingering kiss, the first she had ever given to

man, except her father, and twice she murmured "Farewell!"

"Why do you say Farewell?" said Claude, in a tone of surprise.

"Are we not parting for to-day, my Lord?" said Annie, calmly; and looking him quite full in the face, as she had never dared to look before, she added, with a light laugh, "When we meet again, it will be under such very different circumstances, you know."

"True," said Claude, joining in her merry laugh, "it will be so. Think of me—dream of me to-night, Annie."

"Of whom else should I think! Of whom else should I dream, after—after to-day's happiness!" said Annie.

"In three days," said Claude, as they parted; "in three days you will be all my own. But you will write, Annie? I shall hear from you to-morrow?"

"You shall hear from me to-morrow, my Lord," replied Annie, as her cold hand glided from ~~that~~ of Claude Douglas.

* * * * *

Annie Sherwood was again in her solitary chamber; it was already dark. A servant brought in a lamp, looked at her disordered hair, her yet more disordered countenance, and decided that she, the governess, had been "after no good:" that servant was a prophet, surely! "Thank you," said Annie; and the woman put down the lamp and disappeared.

"What have I to do with light now?" muttered Annie, extinguishing the lamp. "Is not my soul all, all darkness? Would I could thus extinguish the sun that lights so foul a world!" Annie fell on her knees by the bed-side; to pray? Alas, no! she had no faith left in heaven or earth; what idolater has, when the idol that has won his whole passionate soul falls into the dust and mire before his eyes?

Annie Sherwood's was not a nature to be heart-broken. She had too strong a will to be crushed by the unexpected blow that had fallen upon her; no, she was not broken-hearted, but hardened, hardened as the nether mill-stone. When morning broke on her

sleepless eyes, it found no trace of agitation on her face or in her manner. She was quiet and composed,—her plans for life decided. She had vowed in the depth of her humiliation and despair, to tear from her heart the last lingering memory of the passion that had been her crown and glory, and what Annie Sherwood willed she would accomplish.

Lord Claude Douglas impatiently awaited Annie's letter. On reviewing their late interview, some uneasy doubts had arisen in his mind, as to whether he was quite sure of her entire acquiescence in his plans. The expected letter came ; with eager haste Claude broke the seal ; it was written in such a firm hand, such bold characters, as weakness never traced.

“ MY LORD,—I believed you a man of honour ; you supposed me one of those sentimentalists who think ‘ the world well lost for love ! ’ We have been mutually deceived. The offer with which you have honoured me

(the offer of your protection, I suppose I ought to term it), would no doubt be very gratifying to a less ambitious woman than myself; but as that would give me no share in your title, and your fortune is, I believe, inferior to that of Colonel Annesley, who has offered me his name, and a respectable position in society, I trust you will hold me excused for preferring my substantial interest to—what shall I say? Disgrace? no, for disgrace is already mine, since I have already listened to a proposition which, probably, no man makes to any woman, unless he believes her previously lost!

“I hope you will at least give me credit for frank dealing now, however much you may formerly have misconstrued my sentiments. I am in a truth-speaking humour at present, my Lord, and must freely tell you that I regret nothing in Lord Claude Douglas, except that part of himself which he deems too costly to bestow upon me. Should I not accept Colonel Annesley’s honourable proposals, it will simply be that something more

advantageous will present itself. A person in my position is obliged to be mercenary, *bon gré, mal gré*.

“I have the honour to be, my Lord,

“Your Lordship’s very humble servant,

“ANNE SHERWOOD.”

“September 30th, 185—.”

CHAPTER V.

THE time arrived for Annie to leave Brussels, to leave the Curzons, and to see the face of Claude Douglas no more. Her preparations were few; she would not permit herself to look round, or to take a farewell of spots that would have been so dear to memory, could the last few days have been blotted out.

In the interim, several letters had been brought to Annie, of which she had only read the superscription, in order to return them immediately, and unopened, to the writer. Perhaps it would have been well had she looked into them; there might have been contrition—repentance—a wish to make reparation therein testified; there might have been something written there that would have taught even Annie Sherwood to relent, by softening her pride. Perhaps all this

was there ; but had it been, and had Annie known it, then her destiny would have been unaccomplished.

She had passed Claude Douglas in the street, in the public promenade, with so cold and unmoved a countenance, that she seemed to have forgotten herself to stone.

Colonel Annesley had indeed made Annie a *bonâ fide* offer of his withered hand, and his seventy frozen winters. She hated and despised the hoary-headed "*roué*" beyond expression ; but she would now marry him—marry him at any cost, at the cost of life and reason, rather than allow Lord Claude to suppose that she felt any lingering tenderness for him. So Annie wrote, and formally accepted the old man's offer : he eagerly proposed to follow her immediately to London, where the marriage would be solemnized.

Colonel Annesley was a man who dared to justify all he dared to do. He would have been glad indeed to dispense with the ceremony of leading the dependent of Lady Adelaide Curzon to the altar ; but as that

appeared to be a point not likely to be yielded in the capitulation, the gallant veteran did what best he could, and, putting a bold front on the affair, declared his intentions to Mr. Curzon, expecting to meet with much aristocratic surprise, if not a very warm remonstrance ; but, strange to say, Mr. Curzon, on the contrary, congratulated the elderly Adonis, declaring that " Miss Sherwood was one of the most captivating women he had ever known ; he had always appreciated her talents and merits, and he was happy to think that she was about to be placed in a position which she was so well calculated to adorn," &c.

Oh, Mr. Curzon ! Mr. Curzon ! your memory is very short, very short indeed ; but, on the whole, you are a well-meaning, good-natured creature, if you only dared to be so,—if your God whom you serve, the world, would only let you be what you really are. Mr. Curzon went so far as to hint that he had some reason to suspect an attachment on Lord Claude's part to Miss Sherwood, and the Colonel, having so formidable a rival,

might indeed congratulate himself on his conquest. The Colonel accordingly did congratulate himself, and became tenfold more eager in the pursuit of an object which another man, probably, coveted.

The news of the engagement soon spread. Lady Adelaide smiled scornfully. She knew better than the world; she knew that Annie loved Claude Douglas; for one woman can always read another's secrets; and she knew that if she gave herself to any other, it would be worse than death. She hoped that Annie really might marry the Colonel. She had hated her long, ever since she had begun to attract attention and admiration from herself. She could not forgive her having won Lord Claude's heart; and for that she desired revenge—revenge she would amply have, if Annie really married the libertine old man, whose object would be no sooner accomplished, than he would weary of the idol his doting fancy had set up, and break it if he could.

Adelaide well knew, or thought she knew, that there had been some lover's quarrel

between Lord Claude and Annie, and that that was stimulating the latter to a rash act, of which she would immediately repent. Yes, the sooner the marriage took place the better; then Claude would be effectually separated from Annie; and to effect that object had now become the master-passion of the passionless Adelaide's life. It made her cold heart beat; it animated her marble form, and gave an energy to her countenance which had before been entirely wanting. Adelaide was now a much more striking woman than she had been in the calm repose of her passionless beauty. How she was admired as she stepped along with her Juno-like gait, and her proud, glittering eye!—how all admired her, except Claude Douglas! He was still the Mordecai who refused to bow down to her, and Adelaide, stung to the quick, irritated at his insensibility, gloried in his rupture with the woman he loved, and vowed to bring him yet into her bondage, whatever it might cost herself—at whatever sacrifice it might be accomplished.

Lady Adelaide saw Claude's melancholy

and dejected countenance, and, under pretence of sympathizing with his supposed cares, drew him constantly to her house. He eagerly accepted her pressing invitations, but it was in the hope of meeting and conversing with Annie. That object was never accomplished; but so skilfully were the measures of Adelaide taken, so artfully did she adapt herself to his humour, that, forgetful of his late aversion to her selfish character, and soothed unconsciously by her delicate flatteries, he at last grew so accustomed to those daily visits, that he went unsolicited. Anything was better than society which had become a weariness, or solitude, which was a yet greater burden. Moreover, he could not be insensible to the fact, that whenever he entered, Adelaide's eyes lit up with unwonted animation, and that her reception of him was such as she never accorded to any other guest; and then she always yielded her opinions to him, however contrary they might previously have been. How could Lord Claude be other than pleased and flattered!

And Adelaide—unshielded as she was by the holy love that should be as an atmosphere round a wife and mother,—Adelaide, who had lived for herself alone: was there not some danger that she would insensibly become interested in the dangerous game which she had begun, for her amusement? No, for her mortified vanity—for her revenge!

Unsuccessful in his advances towards a reconciliation with Annie, Claude Douglas imagined he might pique her jealousy into that which submission on his part could not accomplish. So he, too, carried on a dangerous game, and daily his assiduities towards Lady Adelaide became more conspicuous. "*Vous jouez avec le feu!*" something whispered every now and then; but he laughed at the inward monitor, and went on.

Lord Claude was told of Annie Sherwood's engagement: he heard it with scornful doubt, and even when Mr. Curzon confirmed the report to him, saying that Colonel Annesley himself was his informant, he merely replied that the old *roué* was a "*vantard*," who was vainly trying to raise the ghosts of

loves buried in the last century. Believe Annie Sherwood was going to marry that doting old man ! Of course, Claude would not. He knew Annie loved him devotedly, whatever she might write, whatever she might say. Offended, wounded she might be; but still she loved him. His passion was increased by the very spirit she had shown; he knew that they would be reconciled, and he was ready now to make some sacrifice to purchase that reconciliation, but, entreaties and submission having failed, he would win her back by alarming her jealous fears.

Mr. Curzon was strangely blind to the fact which everybody else observed, that Lord Claude was flirting with his wife, and his wife something more than flirting with Lord Claude. Husbands are often blind to such things, especially husbands who are satisfied with themselves, and so thoroughly satisfied as was Mr. Curzon.

Something occurred to detain the Curzons in Brussels beyond the time anticipated for their departure. Annie's engagement had

expired ; she determined to proceed to England alone.

A coach stood at the door to convey the governess from the Curzons' inhospitable mansion. A respectable-looking woman was seated in the conveyance ; it was a poor French servant, to whom Annie had shown some kindness, and whom she had engaged to attend her on her journey, as a sort of protection from the slander which she knew was likely to assail her from those she was about to leave. The luggage was already placed on the coach.

Some one knocked at the drawing-room door. "Come in," said Lady Adelaide. Lord Claude was seated beside her, only on a lower chair. He was engaged in holding a skein of silk for Lady Adelaide, which her white fingers were disentangling and winding. Annie Sherwood walked in : her step was firm, her colour high but unvarying, and her breath equally drawn ; there was no trace of agitation in her face.

Directly opposite to her stood Claude, his countenance agitated by emotion : in his con-

fusion he had started up, and dropped Lady Adelaide's silk. Adelaide, too, was agitated; Annie, the only one of the three unmoved. "My engagement has expired, Lady Adelaide," said Annie, composedly. "I have come to remind you that it has, in case you should have forgotten the circumstance."

"It is not the usual hour for the children to walk," said Lady Adelaide, coldly, and glancing at Annie's dress, without noticing her remark.

"No; but my charge has expired. I am leaving."

"Impossible, Miss Sherwood!" said Lady Adelaide, haughtily. "You must remain three weeks longer, till I can suit myself in London."

"I am sorry I cannot oblige you."

"Oblige me! You must have taken leave of your senses! Oblige me! Go and attend to your duties, Miss Sherwood, and let me have no further interruption."

Claude opened his lips to speak; he was advancing towards Annie, his face flushed and agitated; he saw the woman he loved

insulted and oppressed; impulsively he would have rushed to her with shelter and protection; he forgot that he had forfeited all right to offer her either; but Annie, who saw his intention, remembered, and repulsed him with a look of withering contempt. "I repeat once more, Lady Adelaide," said she, calmly, "I have no further duties to perform in your house. Such as I have had, I have faithfully discharged; but it is over now."

"Leave the room, leave it instantly!" cried Adelaide, passionately. She could not bear the look of mingled love, penitence, and sorrow, that Claude bent on Annie. Could she have retained her, to torture her jealous love, by seeing Lord Claude at her feet, she would have done it; if that was not to be, she might go.

"Go!" repeated Adelaide. "You are no fitting inmate for a respectable house! You can apply to the housekeeper for your wages—your salary."

"Annie, Annie!" exclaimed Claude, again approaching, "hear me!"

"If you are disposed for a dramatic rehearsal with that consummate actress, my Lord," exclaimed Adelaide, "I must request that it is not in my presence!" And while she spoke, her beautiful face lost all its beauty, so livid it was with rage.

"My Lord," said Annie, with a cold dignity, which made Claude, despite himself, draw back again, "my time and thoughts are so occupied by my approaching marriage, I have really none for sentimentality. Perhaps, when I am a married woman, I shall find leisure and inclination for flirtation, according to the fashion." So saying, she turned away with a freezing smile, that pierced more than her words.

"What is this? what does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Curzon, who stopped egress by the door.

"Simply this, that I, this day, throw off the heavy yoke of servitude, Mr. Curzon, and am leaving your house."

"But I hoped—I thought you were to accompany us to England, Miss Sherwood."

"My engagements do not permit it, as

your departure is delayed. I am leaving this moment."

"I am sorry, extremely sorry!" said Mr. Curzon.

"I hope you will nevertheless hold me excused for sharing that sentiment, for I am very glad!" said Annie. "My conveyance is at the door. Farewell, Lady Adelaide! farewell, Mr. Curzon! To Lord Claude Douglas, I believe I have never been formally introduced; nevertheless I have great pleasure in wishing him also a last farewell!"

"But your sal—— I mean what we are indebted to you?" said Mr. Curzon.

"Give it to the poor, if you please!" said Annie.

Mr. Curzon politely offered her his hand. Claude would have rushed after her hastily-retreating footsteps, but Adelaide detained him by grasping his arm. "Not unless you would have me die!" she gasped.

The coach dashed on. Annie Sherwood's calm, quiet face remained immovable, except for the contemptuous smile that parted her lips.

Mr. Curzon stood on the steps, looking after the governess. As she swept by the windows, she saw Adelaide lying, perhaps insensible, in the arms of Lord Claude Douglas.

At the corner of the Rue Ducale, looking very pleased and satisfied, stood Colonel Annesley, watching the departure of his betrothed. He was arrayed more than ever in the bravery of juvenile fashion. "*Au revoir!*" exclaimed the Colonel, kissing his hand to Annie. She smiled, bowed, and looked pleased and happy.

Mr. Curzon's last words to Annie Sherwood had been, "I hope that every happiness awaits you, and that you will reckon me among your friends, Miss Sherwood. Whatever may have occurred to render your residence with us at times painful, I trust you will acquit me of taking any share in what may have distressed you."

Oh, Mr. Curzon! what a different effect your words had to that intended! Annie Sherwood well knew they were not intended for her, but for the future Mrs. Annesley,

and she despised your meanness. No, no ; they were never meant for your humble dependant, whom you had so long regarded as something too abject to notice, as you would notice your groom, your horse, or your hound, and whom your condescending patronage would have insulted, even beyond your oppressive haughtiness, had she not despised your understanding too heartily to resent its little emanations !

A few days before her departure, Annie had written to her sister, the sole remaining link between her and Heaven—

“ My Ellen, my own dear Ellen ! the only loved object that I have on earth ! I write to tell you, in a few brief words, that I am just going to be married. Don’t be surprised, nor pained, that I bid neither you, the sister of my soul, nor your husband, to the wedding. As soon would I call down one of the pure spirits from the eternal throne to witness my marriage—for it is an unholy one, a most unholy one ! Oh, Ellen ! I am marrying, not for love, but for hatred and revenge ! I fancy I see you shudder—

fancy that I see your pure face flush with sudden shame and sorrow! Stay, I will not torture you further. Listen to the brighter side of the story.

“My intended is rich, generous, and a gentleman in mind and manner. Moreover, he is easy-tempered, and—— But no more! I cannot go on enlarging on his portrait. You must not see him till all is over. No, you must not see him then, or you would despise me for an act to which I have been goaded by misery and despair. It is useless to remonstrate with me, Ellen: the die is cast. You will not hear from me again till I sign the name of Annesley!”



CHAPTER VI.

A FINE gentleman (according to the Addisonian and Steel notion of a fine gentleman) was Colonel Annesley on his wedding morning, which happened to be his seventy-first birth-day, a circumstance which he thought it advisable to keep from general knowledge, still more from the knowledge of his bride ; so he wished himself many happy returns of the day, and did without the congratulations and good wishes of his friends, except as far as his marriage was concerned. His person, which had been positively handsome half a century before, was about as carefully adorned as that of the all-conquering Mr. Congreve must have been, when he was determined on making "pious Selina" a sinner. The fashion of the Colonel's adornment, if not as bygone as that of Mr. Congreve, was certainly not more modern

than the costume of Beau Brummell would be, could he now appear at St. James's; still it was that of a young man. The gallant gentleman's manners were exactly those of a well-bred Chesterfieldian scholar: and but for the rakish expression of his faded eyes, which had been blue, and now were washed-out colour, he would have been still an agreeable reminiscence of times and things extinct.

Colonel Annesley was very well read, especially in the Shenstonian school of poetry, and was particularly fond of repeating such quotations as—

“She gazed as I slowly withdrew,
My path I could scarcely discern;
So sweetly she bade me adieu,
I thought that she bade me return!”

Colonel Annesley had been desperately in love with Lady Adelaide Curzon, or, as he would have expressed it himself, “had experienced for her a consuming flame!” Consuming it was, and, like the modern invention for smoky chimneys, had proved a self-consumer. Now, he was “*passionné*”

(the Colonel spoke French, though with a very vile English accent) for Lady Adelaide's very antipodes ! It seemed scarcely possible that his bride (he had been married just one hour) could demand from him any concession which he was not ready to make. He had been particularly liberal in the marriage settlements. He had done yet more. He had executed a will in Annie's favour, leaving her unreservedly mistress of the fortune which he could not take with him, when he should lay by the bravery of his attire and perfumes, and lie down with the worm in the silent chambers of death.

Yes, the wedding was over ; there had been rather a large circle of friends to accompany the happy pair to the altar, considering that St. George's had seldom witnessed such a *mésalliance* as that now formed between a man of family and fortune and a simple little governess. No doubt the friends had some reasons for accepting the Colonel's invitation to his nuptials. For the most part they had been civil to the bride, but some had marvelled much to see the quiet

composure with which she had gone through the ceremony ; and all had been considerably astonished that she had displayed nothing approaching awkwardness or vulgarity. The carriage stood at the door, which was to convey the bride and bridegroom away to spend their honeymoon. Oh, what a honeymoon it would be ! It was to be passed in Italy, "Corinne's Italy," as Annie and Claude had been accustomed to call it. Annie was at last to see Rome, the glorious vision that had swept through the dreams of all her life, the one spot that had enthralled her vivid fancy so long, so unceasingly ; and she was to see it in the company of the husband of her choice. Happy Annie !

Already the paragraph had been written describing the wedding and the guests attending, and the sumptuous *déjeuner*, and telling how "the accomplished and lovely bride" (of course she was lovely, now that she was going to be rich) was the daughter of the Rev. H. Sherwood, a name so distinguished in the fields of literature. The late occupation of the bride was not once ad-

verted to; the governess-ship must be suppressed; that would have ruined the whole paragraph. But they named her as a daughter of genius, and author of the well-known and popular works, whose anonymous reputation had reached so high. Then they wound up by describing the tour which the happy pair had already commenced. The paragraph was not to appear till the next day. It had been elaborately written. The Colonel had a great taste for those things, and its insertion was well paid for.

The carriage, as has been already said, was waiting. It had been so for an hour. The bride had retired to assume her travelling dress, so had the youthful bridegroom.

When the door was once shut and locked on Annie, and she stood alone with her own spirit, the quiet of her pale face sank lower, lower still, till it settled into a look of such despairing misery, that a demon might have been touched with latent pity had he seen her.

Her wedding was over, and she who had gone so resolutely through the sacrifice was

beginning to count the cost of a marriage of vengeance, and now she stood in the midst of her gaily-adorned dressing-room—a contrast—oh, what a contrast to its airy elegance! Her magnificent wedding-dress of rich lace was unfastened, and falling off her shoulders; she had trodden on it, and the costly flounces were half torn off, and hanging in tatters like the sordid rags of the beggar; the wreath had fallen from her head, and her feet were crushing the delicate orange-buds; while her long black hair, escaping from its confinement, hung dishevelled around her. One hand was supporting her falling dress, the other tightly clasping a diminutive locket, containing one jetty curl, which she always wore tied round her arm.

The bride stood long lost in thought; of what was she thinking? of her coming honeymoon—her adoring husband? No, she was dreaming of a bright summer's day, in a greenwood's shade, a day too happy for mortality; and, as she thought of it, the stern expression of her brow softened, and a mist of moisture passed over her beautiful

eyes, while the rosy light of love flushed her pale cheek. Then suddenly she started, the scene had changed to an autumnal scene in the same wood, only it had lost its fresh greenness ; and she saw the sun set there, and the light of her own life go down too, never, never to rise again. As she thus thought, the miserable look returned, furious passion chased the love-light from her eyes, and tearing the locket from her arm that she had the moment before so lovingly caressed, she flung it into the fire. An instant after she plunged her hand into the burning coals to rescue it, murmuring, "Not yet ! not yet ! Let me keep it a little longer !" With a heart-breaking sob, she threw herself on the floor.

Annie forgot she was married, forgot that she must prepare to accompany her doating husband to the land of song and romance, "Corinne's Italy !" And the impatient bridegroom, where was he ? he had neither come nor sent to summon her. She might dream on, though he had told her to hasten—she might dream on, blessed or wretched though her dreams might be.

A loud shriek from a woman's voice, and confused rushing of men's feet aroused her; it was not that she heard herself called—how could she answer to the name of Mrs. Annesley? She did not feel, she did not know it was hers. She was not in her own new character at all. She was in Brussels, Lady Adelaide Curzon's ill-used dependent, not quite wretched, for Claude Douglas was going to unrivet her chains soon. Who was the Mrs. Annesley they were calling upon?

At length her door is besieged by the servants—she must wake up! Where was she? what was the strangely splendid room in which she stood? Her room! Annie Sherwood's! the governess! Oh, no! that could not be. Why was she half-clad in that rich, disordered dress? She could not tell; she did not know. Something must have happened! Had she lost Claude's locket, dear Claude's locket? Oh, no! it is safe, and she is fondly clasping it to her bosom; only it is tarnished, and the glass is cracked.

“Mrs. Annesley! Mrs. Annesley!” The

door is at last opened. "Mrs. Annesley ! Oh, Mrs. Annesley, master's dead !"

Annie hears but one word, "dead." "Claude, my Claude ! he is not dead ?" she cries wildly, for she forgets there is any other life than his, and she understands nothing of what has happened, till they lead her where the old man lies, already stiff and cold, but decked out still as the bridegroom of the morning. Then Annie Sherwood remembers that she was a wife, and is a widow, and for awhile a deep awe settles upon her proud spirit.

It appeared from the medical examination which took place, that Colonel Annesley had died of a heart-disease, accelerated by excitement : his death must have been instantaneous. He had entered his dressing-room to prepare for the coming journey, with a gay step and a smiling countenance ; after the door had closed, he was heard humming a French air—

*"L'amour porterait-il des ailes
Si ce n'était pour voltiger?"*

And he was never again seen alive. Alarmed

at his master's not ringing, as he had said he would soon do so, the valet had ventured to knock at the door ; receiving no answer, after some time waiting, he entered. There lay "the gallant, gay Lothario," the splendour of his bridal attire strangely contrasting with the livid face, and the ghastly eyes still open, but dim and expressionless.

* * * * *

The funeral followed quickly on the bridal. Mrs. Annesley recovered from her shock, and assumed with all speed and due propriety, the deep weeds denoting her bereavement ; with those weeds, however, she had put on no dissembling "mockery of woe." She expressed little grief for the loss of one whose character could at best inspire nothing beyond a contemptuous pity.

Though momentarily awed by the sudden death of Colonel Annesley, the spirit of Annie was quite unsubdued, and while, with the utmost external calmness, she entered on her new sphere of action, her heart was a prey to the most agitating passions ; beyond all, jealousy. She was aware that the Curzons

had arrived in London, that Claude Douglas had immediately followed, as if in the suite of Lady Adelaide, and she doubted not his being daily at her house ; that thought alone was torture. As for Claude Douglas, he considered himself an injured man.

One day, Ellen suddenly appeared before her sister. At the sight, every shade of stoicism melted from the face of Annie, and the two embraced in silent tears. "I have come to take you home, Annie! You will not refuse to go with me, dearest?"

"Where is Richard?" asked Annie, without seeming to notice Ellen's question.

"At home. He wanted to come with me, but he could not leave his sick poor."

"I am glad he did not come: I don't think I should like to have seen him now. He is too good a man to look on me with indulgence."

"He loves you, Annie, like a brother."

"Possibly, and for that very reason would give me some of those *coups*, of which it is said, 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend.'"

"But you will go with me, Annie? you will go with me home?"

"Why should I?"

"That we may watch over your health and happiness."

"My health is excellent," said Annie; "it has never been other. I think I am made of wrought iron; nothing shakes me physically. And as for happiness, I have attained that which is supposed to constitute its foundation, wealth and independence. What position can be better, or more enviable, than that of a young widow with money, and spirit to spend it pleasantly?"

"I cannot think a widow's position can be other than very mournful," said Ellen; "but allowing it to be all you say, or would infer, there must be something still wanting to your happiness, dear Annie!"

"True," said Annie, sighing, "a title."

"A title, Annie!"

"Yes, it is the next mark at which I aim, now I have secured a fortune."

"Oh, Annie! Annie! it breaks my heart to see you so little like yourself!" ex-

claimed Ellen, scarcely able to restrain her tears.

“Come, come, Ellen, don’t let us sentimentalize ; I am a little changed, I admit ; but only as much as might have been expected. You forget the ordeal I have gone through. Mrs. Maberly was the first to begin the transmutation of my metal. She effected but a little. Antonia’s heartlessness did more,” added Annie, with a choked voice ; “but it was reserved for Lady Adelaide Curzon and another friend to complete the transmutation. Behold me as I come forth from the crucible — changed, indeed — my former self annihilated ; but not, no, not transmuted into pure gold !” Ellen wept in silence as she listened. “Do you remember,” continued Annie, “do you remember the French governess we used to meet long ago, in the E—— Square Gardens ? Not Julie Angelet (Julie was an angel, and only fit for heaven), but Clarisse. You know she had a trick of saying, ‘*Moi aussi, j’avais bon cœur, mais c’est fini !*’ I am adopting her style and sentiments on a grander scale. Come, Ellen,

no more tears ; let me be happy in my own way, and you, dear one, go back to your Eden. I am not a pure spirit, to enter there. Go back, darling," she added, with all her old fondness of manner, folding her sister in a close embrace, "go back, and walk on in the blessed path that angels light with their smiles. My road, oh, Ellen dear, is far, far apart from yours ! But I am not quite wretched—not quite despairing. I have already won a name in the literary world. I have a refuge in fame. Then I have wealth ; it shall not be ill-spent. I will do with it what even Richard will approve ; and if I ever meet one whose right to it is better than mine—I mean any relation of Colonel Annesley's—I will resign all to him."

"Ah ! now you talk more like yourself," said Ellen, smiling ; "now I begin to recognise my own Annie, and her generous heart. But you must tell me one thing, Annie. You used, long ago, to talk in your letters of a very charming person—a Lord Claude Douglas—and I always thought, I always

fancied he would make you an offer. Richard laughed at me for it; but I could not help fancying it still."

"It was no fancy," said Annie, coldly; "he did make me an offer."

"Why did you not accept him?"

"Colonel Annesley had more money," said Annie, carelessly.

"Then I was wrong in one thing,—you did not love Lord Claude?"

"Love him!" repeated Annie, in a sharp, unnatural tone; "what primitive notions you have, sister mine. I declare you remind me of Mrs. Reuben Butler. But you have never congratulated me on my literary achievements."

"But I have been proud enough to read your books, dear Annie; yet prouder to hear what people have said of them. I knew the world would one day do you justice; that you had only to be known in order to be appreciated."

"Of course," said Annie; "and, as I told you the day we set off from Merton to seek our fortunes, we must all fulfil our *kismet*.

I have been appreciated; you can never tell how well, Ellen, unless you could make the acquaintance of the friends I have just left, at least a little before my marriage."

"And yet you told me how happy you were at the Curzons', only last June, Annie."

"Did I?—Well, I suppose it was true; but like the fairy illuminations in Brussels, last September, which I witnessed, and enjoyed like a child, the lights have gone out in my heart. Poor Colonel Annesley had a very poetical imagination; he used to say my spirits were like shooting stars, gloriously brilliant one minute, but the next exhausted and extinguished in their own light."

"I should have asked you about him before," said Ellen, with much feeling, "but I feared to pain you."

"Dear me, why?"

"His sad end."

"Yes, it was very awful; but I cannot say it affected me much beyond the natural compassion that one feels when they read such things in the newspapers. I was very

sorry for him, very sorry indeed ; but as my heart had nothing to do with the marriage, I am not yet hypocrite enough to play the inconsolable widow."

Ellen sighed deeply ; she sat holding Annie's hand, and looking sorrowfully into her face, as if to try and recognise the warm, generous heart that had once been hers. Then she talked gently, tenderly, to her sister of their lost reverend father, his saintly life, his martyr's end, sudden as Colonel Annesley, but in every other circumstance so widely different. Then she reminded Annie of old familiar scenes and faces, of the trials and privations they had known together, and how a gracious Providence had led them out of darkness into light.

Annie listened, and as she listened, the tear of sensibility would sometimes start to her eye, and her heart would soften beneath the spell of the gentle, loving voice, as beneath the breath of a divine melody ; but the effect was transient, and the hard, strong will came back again all the harder and stronger, after feeling each assault of love and pity.

A few days Ellen remained with her sister, constantly occupied in the endeavour of winning her back to a softer mood, and, if possible, leading her home with her,—to that home where she assured her the most watchful tenderness should efface from her mind the memory of past sorrow. But Annie was “like the deaf adder, who refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely !” “I have not yet fulfilled my *kismet*,” she replied, while she cautiously evaded giving any details of the painful occurrences which had embittered her life and mind, and had stamped in indelible characters, “*Marah*,” on everything that earth could offer.

At length, sad and disappointed, Ellen returned to her pleasant home, where the voice of love and duty called her ; but she bore with her a wounded heart and a gravity of mien hitherto unknown to her gentle nature.

Annie Sherwood turned back to the path she had chosen for herself, and neither by

look nor tone betrayed the ruins within her
dark and despairing soul ; yet inwardly she
repeated—

“ And to be wroth with those we love
Doth work like madness in the brain!”

CHAPTER VII.

“A WEARY world!” said Mrs. Annesley, looking up with what seemed the light of many smiles concentrated in one; “a weary world! No, no, it is full of sunshine and laughter!” She was speaking to a man whose features bore the impress of pensive melancholy, because pensive melancholy was the characteristic which he considered best became his sable looks and sallow complexion; in reality, he had never known a sorrow. There is a mask of sorrow as well as a mask of gladness.

It was a brilliant assembly; Mrs. Annesley was the fashion; she had almost reached the zenith of her literary fame, and apparently that of her happiness also. She was wealthy, a reigning genius, and was, to her own infinite astonishment, proclaimed a beauty! No shade of sorrow was ever seen to pass over

her expressive features, her eyes were ever brilliant, her pale cheek pale no longer, but flushed with a brilliant colour that seemed born of inward contentment. She had friends, oh, so many! She that had been friendless, but for her child-like sister; and she loved to gather round her a brilliant throng of wit and genius. Her literary *soirées* were frequent, but *recherchées*, and none seemed to remember, or trouble themselves to ask, what had been what the French would call her "antécédents."

But in the midst of an admiring crowd, while strains of rich harmony filled her gorgeous apartments, and her gayest sallies enchained the ears of her auditors, the envied, admired, flattered Mrs. Annesley would suddenly glide from her throne, and in the secret solitude of her chamber, might have been found on her knees, or stretched on the floor, the false lights of feigned joy extinguished in her eyes, the smiles gone from her lips, and her brilliant colour exchanged for a livid countenance of misery. Sometimes at such an hour as that, a meanly-clad woman

in a brown merino gown and an old coarse straw-bonnet, might have been seen to glide down a back-staircase in the luxurious mansion, to pass swiftly and cautiously through the hall, and out of the door into the dark streets. There she would stand with a half-bewildered look, pressing her thin white hands together, and looking up at some solitary star, with a vague wondering look, and as if the difference between its shining brightness and her own dark soul bewildered her brain. "Thou art bright!" she would exclaim; "thou art bright, oh, star, yet art thou cold and desolate. Thou hast never loved nor been loved with warm passion, and I—yes I, at least, have loved and been loved! Wretched as I am, none can take the past from me—the precious past! I will see him once again; I will see his shadow on the window-blind! but hers—hers will be there too! Oh, hate! undying hate! is there no respite from remembering her! Could I forget her one minute, just one minute, that his image might come back to me undimmed, unsullied! But they are toge-

ther, always together in my despairing mind. And I must go on thinking, thinking, till thought will grow into madness. Ah, me, it is madness now !”

She went on swiftly through the dark streets, swiftly as our feet hurry on to some great unmeasured joy, till she stopt before the well-known windows of Lady Adelaide Curzon, in G—— Square.

There was a subdued light in the drawing-room. A shadow fell on the blinds, only one, tall, slender, stately. But oh, joy ! She is alone ! He is not at her side, and for a moment hatred and jealousy are lulled. A carriage draws up at the door, and, coming from a contrary direction, a dark cabriolet arrives, with a foreign servant behind it, as well as a diminutive tiger. The carriage is empty. It has come to take some one up. In the cabriolet is a gentleman in black ; he alights with a slow, languid step, as if bound on a task not a pleasure, and stands some minutes with his head uncovered in the cold night dew, pale, thoughtful, and melancholy. A poor woman is standing leaning against

the railings of the house. She suddenly darts forward, with clasped, imploring hands. She is a beggar asking relief, it is plain. Beggars are at every corner of the streets in London. The gentleman throws her a coin. She shrinks back with a dejected air, and forgets to pick up the dole. But still she must be in distress, for her low, choked sobs speak eloquently of misery. Another time that man would have stooped—would have drawn from the wretched woman her tale of woe, and snatched her from misery. Now, he is bent on other thoughts.

“Lord Claude Douglas!” said Mr. Curzon’s voice, as he passed over the threshold of his home, and there was more of displeasure than of welcome in his tone.

“In proper person,” replied his Lordship, affecting an air of gaiety. “How is Lady Adelaide this evening?”

“I really cannot say. I believe you have seen her since I have!” said Mr. Curzon, with marked emphasis. “Good evening, I am rather in haste to get to the House. I

suppose Lady Adelaide has pressed you into her service for the opera!" Mr. Curzon entered his carriage, which immediately drove off, and Lord Claude, with a slow step, went into the house. There are two shadows now upon the blinds in the drawing-room, and there is a poor frail woman still clinging to the railings; and as she fixes a charmed eye on the window, the two within are startled by a long, wild shriek from the dark street. There is a tragedy in that prolonged agonizing cry, the climax of a dark drama; but they know not its history nor meaning. It is the mendicant that Lord Claude relieved. She is drunken. He has thrown alms to an impostor. A bitter smile crosses his haggard face as he repeats, "the world is full of cheats."

"Her voice is like Miss Sherwood's when she acted," said Lady Adelaide, looking hard in Claude's face to see the impression her words made.

"Yes, yes, when she acted!" he repeated, while his eye glared, and his face writhed with suppressed rage. Was that fierce anger

against her—Adelaide? or was it against Annie Sherwood? She did not know; she did not feel sure whether she would like to know. But he was angry, fierce as a whirlwind; he did not act, all was real then with him.

The cabriolet still stood at the door, the horse impatiently pawed the ground. The tiger, he was newly in Lord Claude's service, forgot his manners, and began to hum rather loudly—

“I'd rather own that car, sir,
With Peggy at my side,
Than a coach and four with gold galore,
And a lady for my bride!
The lady would sit fornenst me
On a cushion made with taste,” &c., &c.

“I say, good woman! you'd better be off, unless you'd like a trip to the police-station. What business of yours is it watching your betters, and making a disturbance? Only let my lord catch you when he comes out, that's all!” That was without. Within—“Come as you are,” and it was roughly, almost brutally spoken. “I must have a

cloak ; let me get a cloak ; I shall be so cold, Claude !”

“Cold ! nonsense ! You can’t be cold ; I am hot, burning lava ! a furnace within and around me. Come, I say ; it is too late to think now ! An abyss before us—behind, hell and destruction !” and he spoke through his clenched teeth.

They passed quickly down the staircase, out of the hall-door, and into the cabriolet. The beggar woman was still there ; she rushed forward ; she tried to gasp a word whose utterance choked her, it might have been a benediction—it might have been a curse ! Lord Claude threw her no alms this time ; no, he threatened her with the lash of his whip. Once more the heart-breaking shriek ran through the dark night, and the quiet passers-by stared, as they saw a frantic woman rush forward in pursuit of the quickly-driven cabriolet, till spent and exhausted she stumbled against a lamp-post, and fell down.

* * * * *

“ You have deserted us for two hours, Mrs.

Annesley !” exclaimed one of her guests, as the young widow walked into her brilliantly-lit drawing-rooms.

“Have I ?” said she, slightly laughing. “I had no idea I had been so long rude.”

“You have been taking a beauty sleep !”

“No, indeed ; nor inventing a new sleeve.”

“Writing ?”

“I have been to the play !”

“Impossible !”

“I assure you I have.”

“Who has had the privilege of attending you ?”

“Ah, now you are cross-questioning unfairly,” said Annie, smiling ; “but to tell you the truth, I have been putting the finishing stroke to a tragedy of my own.”

“Delightful ! When will it be seen ?”

“I don’t know ; it may appear before the critical world later, but possibly in a day or two. To make up for my inhospitable desertion, suppose I give you a little Shakspearian reading ?” Every one seemed delighted at the proposition. Some one asked for “the

Merchant of Venice." "No, no, not that!" said Annie, shuddering visibly.

"You are not well!" said a friend, anxiously.

"Quite well, thank you," said Annie, "only rather cold. Be good enough to ring for a shawl. But to return to our play. Let us have nothing tragic! I have just finished 'my dismal scene,' you know. I cannot afford to 'sup on horrors' a second time. Let us have the antipodes of tragedy. What say you to *Midsommer Night's Dream*?" So that was the chosen play; and Mrs. Annesley read, or rather recited, the varied scenes, as if with spirit attentive, and mind wholly disengaged from other thoughts. But now and then a shivering crept over her frame, and a sudden pallor suffused her cheeks. She said she had caught cold, and drew her shawl more closely round her. At supper, her spirits were even more than usually brilliant, and her cheeks flushed the deepest crimson; still the strange shiver every now and then ran over her. She would not consent to let her guests depart

till a very late hour ; indeed, not till half the night was consumed. When, at last, they retired, each and all declared her the most fascinating woman living, and—the happiest. Among her visitors had been a very young man, named Beresford, whose eyes followed her with a kind of wondering adoration. Towards him Annie displayed distinguishing kindness ; to him she spoke with a gentler gravity than was her wont ; and was day by day bending his plastic spirit into a shape that would make of him a distinguished man. Annie had an affection for that youth—an affection like a young mother's—and he loved her with the romantic enthusiasm of young life, a passion which would one day calm down into respectful friendship, one day when he had done reading “ *Froissart's Chronicles*.”

CHAPTER VIII.

AN elopement in high life seems rather a matter of pleasurable excitement, breaking through the monotony of an unvarying round of empty conventionalities, than the subject of grave wonder or regret. The disappearance of Lady Adelaide Curzon from her domestic circle, had been first published by means of Miss Dobson, who had been "most shamefully left behind." Mr. Curzon was during three days ignorant of his wife's desertion. He had been absent, having left town the same evening it took place, without first returning from the House. Miss Dobson and the butler, directly the fact was ascertained of Lady Adelaide's flight, and even before it was quite certain, concocted the following pathetic paragraph, which, from its interesting nature, of course gained immediate insertion in the earliest paper:—

“Elopement in high life.—The fashionable world will learn with equal regret and surprise, that the domestic happiness of the respected Member for —— has been abruptly interrupted by the elopement of Lady A—— C——. The partner of her flight is understood to be Lord C—— D——. The unfortunate husband is already in pursuit of the fugitives, who, it is supposed, have taken the route of Italy.”

Miss Dobson desired revenge for having lost her lucrative place of toad-eater, and the butler desired revenge on Lady Adelaide for her pride.

Of course the paragraph created a great sensation; it could not do otherwise; but the commentaries usually wound up with “There will be a divorce; Douglas will marry her. She will be Marchioness of Dryburgh some day; no doubt had an eye to it all the time! The opinion, however, was very general, that Lady Adelaide had rather drawn Claude Douglas into her snares, than been led astray by him; and those who had hearts at all, heard with real

pain of the first stain on the hitherto unblemished reputation of the admired Lord Claude Douglas, who, in an age of fashionable vice and levity, had always been considered above reproach. It was a sad fall for the hero of so many imaginations—a sadder one for himself; for Claude Douglas, though a man of fashion, had strict notions of *old-fashioned* honour, and though a man of impulsive passions, had even held a religious abhorrence of immorality until lately. He had never loved—never even admired Adelaide Curzon. The mystery of their guilty flight was a mystery indeed, and as such must remain. After a while the curious and the kind-hearted alike dismissed from their thoughts the man who had betrayed his friend—the woman who had shared in the guilty treachery, and who had recklessly abandoned husband, children, and all the sanctities of home.

* * * * *

“The Honourable Mr. Curzon,” said a page, throwing wide open the door of the drawing-room, in which Mrs. Annesley was

seated. She was in a *fauteuil*, apparently engaged in reading a folio, which rested on her knee, but in reality her hands were clasped on her closed eyes, and her features were agitated by painful thoughts. At the name of Curzon, Mrs. Annesley started and changed colour, but ere the visitor entered, her countenance had recovered its usual serenity, and she received him with quiet dignity.

Mr. Curzon was frightfully pale, and his haggard, distracted appearance would have struck any one with compassion; perhaps Mrs. Annesley's heart was quite hardened, for she displayed none.

"I have called to ask you a favour—a very great favour, Mrs. Annesley," said Mr. Curzon. "I hope you will pardon the liberty I take."

Annie bowed in a cold, polite sort of way, which seemed to imply, "pray proceed."

"You know of my—you have heard of—of that wretched woman's desertion of her home?"

"My acquaintance is almost entirely con-

fined to literary people," said Mrs. Annesley. "I know nothing of what is going on in more pretending circles, to which I have neither the right nor the inclination to belong. I seldom read the papers, unless the political articles."

"Can it be possible that you do not know—that you have not heard that my wife, the mother of my children, has gone from me!—Gone from me! flying with the heartless villain who called himself my friend! You shudder, Mrs. Annesley; no wonder, a noble heart like yours cannot hear of such things without horror! Yes, she is gone! and my boys,—my poor boys. But it is of them I came to speak. Can you—will you take them under your protection till I—till I return,—if I ever do return?"

"Assuredly I will, Mr. Curzon," said Annie. "But you, sir—(she called him '*sir*' from habit, he had once been her *master*)—where would you go?—for what?"

"Can you ask! you that know what pride and honour are! To pursue that villain Douglas!—To tear her from him!

and wash the foul stain off from my name in his blood or mine!"

"Oh, for pity sake, pause!—hesitate, ere you spill a life so precious—so precious still," gasped Annie, in a voice of such intense anguish, that Mr. Curzon, even in the midst of his paroxysm of just resentment, started and looked at her with interest, curiosity, and admiration,—yes, all three; for he did not, he could not look into her heart,—he could not see anything beneath the surface. He saw only the pale, clasped hands; the face of intense, agonized emotion; the bloodless cheeks and lips; the supplicating looks; and (oh, vanity!) he someway interpreted all he saw *into an earnest anxiety for his own safety*. The flattering assurance of Mrs. Annesley's regard, did much to soothe his agitated mind. "Ah! if Adelaide had had a heart like yours," he sighed. "But I must pursue them; his death or mine alone can satisfy the world's justice, or my honour."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Annie, "it would but add folly to crime, and sacrifice a life worth

a universe of lives !” and, utterly forgetful or regardless of appearances, Mrs. Annesley poured forth such a torrent of tears and passionate supplications, that Mr. Curzon would not seek a hostile meeting with Lord Claude, that she succeeded in wringing a promise from him to that effect.

Utterly unconscious was Annie of the interpretation which Mr. Curzon had given to her words, or her extreme emotion. Unconscious, too, that ere he departed, he had thrice raised her trembling hand to his lips, only relinquishing it as he departed. When alone, she had but one impression distinctly, and she exclaimed several times aloud, “I have saved him ! I have saved him ! but must it be for her ? to live for her ? for her only ? No ! no ! let them both perish. I will recall my words ! Let him die ! Die ! my Claude die ! No ! no ! Let him live at any price, at any cost of misery to me !”

The Curzon boys came to stay some time with Mrs. Annesley. She received them kindly ; she knew exactly what would content their selfish, sensual natures. She could

not talk to them much as she would have talked to other children; they could not have understood her. Sydney was at Harrow, they said. "*He* would be sorry about mamma's running away, for she used to take him out in the carriage, and to the Opera; as for them, it was quite a different thing. That *nasty thing*, Dobbie, was gone, so they would be rather better off for the change!" They thought Mrs. Annesley's desserts nicer than theirs at home, and her carriage had softer cushions; besides, she gave them money, and cakes, and toys, and let them talk as much as they liked! On the whole, it was rather nice that mamma had run away; if she had not, they would never have visited Mrs. Annesley!

CHAPTER IX.

MR. CURZON had interest: his divorce was hurried on, as never before divorce had been; and while the business was pending, he was a grave, silent man, entirely withdrawn from society; indeed, almost invisible. During weeks, and even months, the motherless children were left under Mrs. Annesley's care, as much as if they had been literally orphans. Their father became the most attentive and affectionate parent in the world: he came to see them every day. They coaxed and wheedled him out of everything they wanted; and in some way connecting their recent indulgences with their mother's disappearance, and Mrs. Annesley's protection, they arrived at the conclusion that from her all their good fortune emanated. "I wish, papa," said the youngest, in Mrs. Annesley's presence, one day, "I wish,

now mamma's gone, you would marry Mrs. Annesley !”

How Mr. Curzon started at those words ! How the old forbidding, haughty look of old times returned to his aristocratic features ! The next minute it was all gone, and he bit his lip with vexation, hearing Annie's cool reply, “That would not exactly suit me, my dear ; I have all the fortune I require, and if I marry again, I expect a title !”

Mr. Curzon looked at the *ci-devant* governess, as if he had never seen her before, and remarked that “Diogenes might have taken his lantern in search of a disinterested woman rather than of an honest man !”

“Disinterestedness does for the age of romance,” said Annie. “Later in life, it is absurd to assume a sentimental generosity, which has probably died a natural death long before. Besides, a person in my position, and with my present character (for I suppose every one knows that I have rubbed years enough against the world's rough edges, to become harder than nature made me), has attained to all the world can offer,

short of rank. That must form the apex of my pyramid, which stands on the uncertain foundation of newly-acquired literary distinction. I think a coronet would, though a bauble in itself, have weight enough to steady the edifice. Don't you agree with me, Mr. Curzon? I dare say you do."

"Mrs. Annesley, you have the art of making every one agree with you!" said Mr. Curzon, sighing. He was rather disappointed, and beginning to think that the interest for himself, which he had imagined to exist in the mind of the fascinating widow, was more fanciful than real. Like all weak-minded men in similar circumstances, he was piqued by her coolness, and vainly strove to account to himself for the violent agitation she had evinced, when he had proposed following the guilty fugitives. Could it have been love for Lord Claude? No! impossible! The phrensy of jealous passion could never live under that habitually calm exterior, whose only alternation was now lively sallies of gaiety. It remained an unsolved problem, and there were few problems which the mind of Mr. Curzon

was acute enough to solve. To say that the abandonment and degradation of the woman who bore his name had not been a shock to Mr. Curzon, would not be true ; but his love for Adelaide had long before perished, and his pride was much more wounded by her desertion than his heart. Miss her he did not ; but he did miss the *éclat* which her stately beauty had thrown round her name, and reflected upon his. His house looked naked and desolate without that grand, cold statue, that had walked off its pedestal, leaving nothing to fill the empty place. Yes, the house looked gloomy enough ; perhaps that was one reason that drew Mr. Curzon so constantly to Mrs. Annesley's more cheerful dwelling. There was something in her which made time pass smoothly and pleasantly, and in her society he sometimes forgot his trials. He could not tell in what her charm consisted, for he could not enter into her mind or nature ; but still he had the capacity of being influenced by them, and to spend some time near her daily, became at last an absolute necessity.



It has been said the divorce was pending. At first there was no appearance of Lady Adelaide's being desirous to oppose the proceedings. Of course there was not: even in the very depth of confusing guilt, Adelaide could calculate: her reputation was ruined. After the divorce, Lord Claude would be compelled to marry her; the world's code would force him to do it. By degrees, she reasoned,—by degrees, she might reascend the social scale, and reach to something higher than the position she had forfeited. The old peccadilloes of Lady Adelaide Curzon would scarcely be visited on the head of the wealthy Marchioness of Dryburgh. The sooner Mr. Curzon divorced her the better: she would certainly throw no obstacle in his way.

But events occurred which modified the lady's views. To the inexpressible chagrin of Adelaide, the Marquis of Dryburgh married, and almost simultaneously Mr. Curzon was raised to the peerage, for no particular merits of his own, be it recorded, but simply to help forward some pet measures of a

minister, which required casting votes in the Upper House.

The Earl of Ellaby was as pleased with his title as a child with a new bauble, and held his head aloft in society, as though his name were as untarnished as his new laurels ; while the Countess (for such she would be till the divorce was accomplished) bitterly lamented the *faux pas*, which would only allow her the use of a well-sounding title, until her marriage should be dissolved.

CHAPTER X.

To retrace a few steps. It was a lovely spot on the banks of the Arno which the fugitives had chosen for their first retreat; but to both it proved repugnant; for where can guilt find rest?—Not in Heaven itself, could it obtain entrance there. They moved on to Venice, by Claude's choice. Lady Adelaide was installed in a magnificent palazzo on the Grand Canal. She was surrounded by magnificence; nor that alone: everything that could charm the most fastidious taste was hers, but she was discontented and repining. It was not repentance; it could not be called sorrow; but she had lost all her old, calm, proud bearing, and it was replaced by fitful ill-humour and jealous exactions. While lavishing on her his fortune, and devising daily some fresh indulgence for her whims, the unhappy Claude

fled from her society as much as he could. To him life was a burden, and but for that something unknown,—that terrible secret of an eternal world,—he would joyfully have rushed on death to avoid present misery.

This will be thought an exaggerated picture of a man of the world: it is a true one, nevertheless, of the individual here portrayed. It was not a trifle to Claude Douglas to have survived honour and reputation, to have wronged a friend, and to have forfeited every good man's esteem, as well as his own approval.

"I wonder when this tedious business will end!" exclaimed Lady Adelaide one day, looking up from reading a newspaper.

"What business?" asked Claude, abstractedly.

"Why, mine and yours; both our business, I suppose!" said Adelaide, impatiently, and throwing the paper on the floor.

"Surely you have not been reading it?"

"Reading it!—of course I have, if by 'it' you mean Mr. Curzon's proceedings. But, do you know, I begin to fear that he is not

in earnest, the affair is so slow. I wish it were over."

"Of course, the sooner it is over, the sooner we may hope to be forgotten."

"Forgotten! Oh, that's not to be thought of yet,—at least, not till some one else makes a *faux pas*. By-the-bye, I hope you're prepared for heavy damages."

Claude fixed his eye on the speaker with something between wonder and disgust. She read his meaning.

"You look shocked, my Lord."

"I am shocked, Lady Adelaide; though, God knows, I have little right to be so, fallen as I am from all honour and——"

"Virtue! I suppose you mean," said Adelaide, with a sneer. "But it is quite worthy so weak a mind as yours to go drivelling through the world like a penitent monk, instead of justifying your own actions."

"I cannot justify them; they are unjustifiable!" said Claude.

"Then make the best of them."

"The best of them! I am so wretched that the Arch-fiend himself might pity me.

I, that looked and aimed so high ! Well, it is just retribution for my first step in evil."

" Pray cease annoying me by cant, Lord Claude ; if there is one thing I detest more than another, it is that. The thing is done—must stand as it is. When I am your wife, I hope I shall teach you to be a little more manly and rational. We shall be more together than Mr. Curzon and I were. I mean you to get into Parliament and oppose him."

" More together ! my wife !" repeated Claude, with an involuntary shudder, contemplating the possibility of being chained for life to that hard, stony woman.

" Yes," said Lady Adelaide ; " I suppose your boasted honour will not let you escape from making what reparation you can for the ruin you have brought upon me."

" My honour !—it is gone, dead, trampled in the mire !" exclaimed Claude, passionately, adding, more calmly, " Of course, Lady Adelaide, if you wish to share my unhappy name, I shall comply with that, or any other request you may make—as a duty. Pshaw !

I defile a holy word, as a sacrifice to your interests."

"I am glad to find you so complying, my Lord; and, to mark my sense of your extreme liberality, the first request I shall make, the first sacrifice to my interests, shall be a very small one; of course it will be accorded, after the declaration you have made."

"Certainly."

"Thank you. Give me the packet of letters that I saw you take from your desk this morning, and put in your pocket, when you went out into the gondola."

"The packet of letters!"

"Yes; I suppose you don't mean to deny having had them?"

"I mean to make no assertions on the subject. I believe you have no interest in the matter."

"But I have the greatest—you *shall* give them to me!"

"I cannot,—shall not!"

"*Shall* not!" repeated Adelaide, in a fury.

"No, shall not. You had better give up this foolery."

"Do you mean to insult me, my Lord?"

"Far from it; but I am wretched enough without these petty annoyances."

"You are wretched, Claude Douglas!—then what do you think *I* am?" said Adelaide, passionately.

"Your situation is, of course, most painful," said Claude, softening; "nobody—you yourself—cannot feel that more than I do."

"My situation,—nonsense! that may be got over. But, after all I have sacrificed for you, my Lord, do you think I will tamely bear your shameful neglect? Do you think I will sit here in this dismal solitude, while you are roaming over the water, like a sentimental schoolboy, devouring that woman's letter for the hundredth time."

"What woman? you are mad!"

"No, you would make me so; but I am not the tame idiot you take me to be, if you think I will bear this any longer. So, you thought I was hoodwinked—that I had never seen her writing, perhaps! You forgot how often I had paid her wages and had her receipt!" and while Adelaide spoke, a gleam

of malignant exultation crossed her face.
“Come, you may as well give them to me.
I know every word of their contents already.”

“How? have you dared!”

“Dared, my Lord! Do you threaten me?
Give me those letters, or you may repent it!”

“You shall never pollute them with a
touch.”

“Give them to me!” vociferated Adelaide,
“or I will throw myself into the canal be-
fore your eyes!”

Claude’s face writhed with passion as he
hastily threw the contested packet into the
fire, and forcibly holding it down, watched
the consuming flame till the record of a once
noble heart was reduced to impalpable ashes.

“I am satisfied,” said Adelaide, coolly; “I
knew you would hear reason at last. I did
not the least want to have that mass of
absurd rhapsody—I merely wanted to make
you ashamed of carrying about with you
sentimental mementoes of Mr. Curzon’s
mistress.”

Claude’s face became livid with rage.

“Unhappy woman!” he exclaimed, “will

nothing suffice you, but bringing down every noble character to your own level?"

"Little need of bringing down a creature already so low!" said Adelaide, contemptuously; "the very servants were witnesses of her improper conduct with Mr. Curzon, and saw the letters that passed between them, at the very time you also were pouring out your sentimental effusions to the vulgar little thing. It was well known, too, that she frequently met Colonel Annesley out of the house before she entrapped him into the marriage. I never could keep her in at night. If she was not your mistress, it was only because your offers were not liberal enough to tempt her avarice."

"It is false! all, absolutely false; she did nothing of what you impute to her!"

"She did all, and more, and you know she did."

"I know nothing of the sort, and will never believe a word breathed against her. She is as much above you as the sky is above yon muddy water that defiles its reflection; and but for my cowardice,—my

guilt,—would never have been driven into a marriage which her soul abhorred.”

“Indeed you are growing quite heroic in defence of your immaculate heroine! What should you say if I were to tell you, that her present intimacy with Mr. Curzon is the talk of the whole town?”

“I should not believe it.”

“But if I had proofs—unanswerable proofs?”

“No more, Madam, no more!” exclaimed Claude. “The name of Mrs. Annesley is defiled by your lips or mine! Oh, Annie! Annie!” he cried, passionately, as he left the room, “you are revenged!—deeply, bitterly revenged!”

The splashing of oars was heard on the canal.

“Where are you going?” asked Adelaide, rushing down the broad staircase after Claude.

“Going! Nowhere!—anywhere, I mean; out in the gondola. I——”

“I shall go too, then.”

“You had better not. I shall stay out all night.”

"If so, I shall do the same!" and Lady Adelaide stepped resolutely into the gondola.

"Not silent rows the Adrian gondolier."

The man had a melodious voice. He took that splendid specimen of manhood and that beautiful woman for lovers, and while he thrust the gondola from the marble steps of the palazzo, he began to sing a Venetian love-song. The words occurring most frequently, and given with the most pathos, were "Amore" and "Onore;" and as they smote on the ears of Claude Douglas, he buried his face in his hands and wept like a woman, as he murmured, "Amore! Onore!" "I have lost both!—for ever! for ever!"

The very next day arrived the news of Mr. Curzon's elevation to the Peerage. It threw Adelaide into a fit of gloomy discontent. Alternately she wept sullen tears and reproached Claude, not with her fall from high or holy principles,—not with her degradation in her children's eyes,—not with the loss of husband, home, or kindred, and kindred love; but with the loss of

rank and honours. To complete her wretchedness and despair, came the marriage of the Marquis of Dryburgh. Immediately that the fatal intelligence (for such she considered it) was communicated to her, she began with a sort of despairing energy to sift out means of opposing Mr. Curzon's suit for divorce, and of rendering that impossible, which she had so long and so ardently desired. She clung so wildly to the slender hope of being called a Countess, more, perchance, than one would to whom the baubles and trappings of rank were entirely strange. Claude listened to her now with some satisfaction; his only aim in life was to throw off the guilty burden he had brought upon his head, and to hide his sorrow and repentance in an obscurity that the world's eye could never penetrate. But vainly he clung even to such hopes as these; he had not yet drained the last dregs of misery's cup, and in the meantime, each hour of life was torture.

CHAPTER XI.

THE Earl of Ellaby was free; once more a fair mark for match-making mothers, and ladies *en recherche* for an establishment. Moreover, there was now the added lure of the title; and bets were made as to who would succeed in carrying off the new peer.

Lord Ellaby's attentions to Mrs. Annesley were remarked on by everybody, before he had the least idea of remarking on them himself. Then the proud man's pride started as from a sleep; he remembered what Annie had been in his own house, too—something scarcely equal to an upper servant. He began to grow prudent, and gradually to diminish his visits, but habit is very strong. His weak mind had acquired that of leaning on Mrs. Annesley's judgment, as well as seeking consolation in her society, and ere long he returned as often as usual.

Lord Ellaby's children were still at Mrs. Annesley's, because they coaxed to be left; and he, quite unaccustomed to their guidance, found that yielding to their wishes was a great convenience to himself. They had a governess with them, a quiet, meek creature, over whom they tyrannized when Mrs. Annesley was out of the way

Annie had not forgotten what she had been. She was not yet hardened enough in worldliness to wreak on an unfortunate dependent what she had herself suffered.

And yet she was sadly altered. She walked through the world with as cold and heartless, if not as proud an air, as Adelaide had ever borne. Nothing seemed to ruffle the calm surface, except the electric play of intellect, or the flash of wit, and they were cold sunshine! The heart said nothing! Sometimes Ellen's letters would lie unopened for days. Perhaps that was not all from heartlessness. Perhaps Annie would not trust herself always face to face with that holy, loving nature, which would, despite herself, make the heart throb, and the eyes

fill. "I will forget myself to stone;" yet many, many were the secret conflicts with her better nature, ere unmixed evil prevailed. If something momentarily softened her, the next minute the remembrance of Adelaide would make of her a perfect Nemesis.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "she is with him hour after hour, day after day! For her he lives! together they will always live. Can I do nothing? positively nothing? Must I sit down in my wretchedness and bear it all!—all! She has no heart to break. Surely I can find some means, some way to make her feel a tithe of what I have suffered. No, no! she can feel nothing—she never could! And I—I am fast forgetting what feeling means. Her husband? No, she never loved him. I have wearied myself with his sickening company to no purpose; she cannot be jealous of him. Stay! I forget, he is not her husband now! A light breaks in upon my mind!" and Annie rose, clapping her hands as if for joy, while her pale cheek and dilated eye spoke more suffering than gladness.

“Heaven is merciful—or the powers of darkness help me to revenge! I will be the Countess of Ellaby, and wear the honours she has forfeited. That she will feel; she will writhe to know me wearing her lost coronet. But I shall be weak; I shall fail in my resolves, unless I tell myself over and over again, ‘I had one treasure—one, only one in the wide world! She took it from me—defiled—ruined it! She—she made me what I am, and her work turns against herself. But for her, Claude would have repented of the base wrong—the outrage he offered me. He did repent—he did return; and she, fiend—demon—snatched him back, and trampled me in the dust! And at last—at last he held his whip, threatening, over my head! But did he know me? Yes, yes; and she directed him how to strike. I will not hurt one hair of his head—not one; but she shall writhe. Vengeance, I am all thine! No more soft relentings; no more coward pity! My hand cannot reach her, but my hate shall!’”

“Lord Ellaby, did you say?” she asked

eagerly, as a servant entered. "Tell him I will be with him directly."

Before Mrs. Annesley descended to the drawing-room to receive her noble visitor, she had scrupulously adorned herself most becomingly, not with over-dress, not with rich apparel, but with that noble simplicity which best became her intellectual countenance. Never had she taken such pains to charm and captivate—never had her soft voice been so exquisitely modulated to tenderness; no, not when she talked of love with Claude Douglas in the green wood! Never had her expressive eyes beamed with such feeling. Lord Ellaby had long admired her; now he was thoroughly taken captive. Mrs. Annesley consulted him on a great many points, on which she averred that her own judgment could not pronounce. She appealed to him for abstract pieces of information, of which she professed herself totally ignorant. She was so gratified to find he had read and appreciated her works, to him they must seem so light and trifling, she had scarcely dared to hope for his ap-

proval. Then Mrs. Annesley took up and read a few pages of a new poem, and when she had finished, confessed that she had read it in the hope of luring him from the House that day. The House! Lord Ellaby had forgotten its existence; all the peers, temporal and spiritual, might be consigned to Erebus for him; and Mr. Curzon—no, Lord Ellaby pulled up his shirt-collar, looked sideways in the glass, re-arranged his curly hair, and mentally decided that he was still a very handsome fellow! That day was entirely devoted to Mrs. Annesley, and the next, and the next too, and each one in succession.

“I am a good actress!” said Mrs. Annesley. “Ellaby is the profoundest of fools! I half pity him, and wish I could arrive at my end without making his simple credulity the means!”

horizon, and every poet cannot be Hyperion."

"I have been reading your last book Mrs. Amesley; everybody is enchanted with it."

"Are they?" said Annie, with real or affected indifference. "People are all going to see the Earthmen and Aztecs and they are enchanted with *them*! How do you like the new bonnets? the papers say her Majesty wears hers on her head."

"Here comes Lord Ellaby! he is extremely handsome! how dignified! Don't you admire him, Mrs. Amesley?"

"What a question to ask of such a man!"

"Ah, I see the report is true!"

"What report, Mrs. Wilmington?"

"About him."

"Is there anything new about Lord Ellaby?" asked Annie, coolly.

"Well, not exactly new; they have said, for some time, that he was going to be married."

"Oh, is that all? I have heard vague reports of the kind myself. We shall see. But don't you dance? Shall I find you a

CHAPTER XII.

"THEY are still together, still in Venice, soon to be married, I hear. Did you ever see Lord Claude Douglas, Mrs. Annesley?"

"I have met him."

"He was a very fascinating man; don't you think so?"

"Oh, of course! Have you read the new poet, Mrs. Wilmington?"

"Every one has. What do you literati say?"

"I think—I cannot answer for others' opinions—I think him 'un ange, mais un ange déchu;' but he is really a genius. His misfortune seems to me, to have pondered Shelley too closely, copying the faults which corrode his style, till he imagines far-fetched images and impure ideas the height of perfection. Still he is a bright star, though lingering too much on the earth-bound

horizon, and every poet cannot be Hyperion."

"I have been reading your last book, Mrs. Annesley; everybody is enchanted with it!"

"Are they?" said Annie, with real or affected indifference. "People are all going to see the Earthmen, and Azteks, and they are enchanted with *them*! How do you like the new bonnets? the papers say her Majesty wears hers *on* her head."

"Here comes Lord Ellaby! he is extremely handsome! how dignified! Don't you admire him, Mrs. Annesley?"

"What a question to ask of such a man!"

"Ah, I see the report is true!"

"What report, Mrs. Wilmington?"

"About him."

"Is there anything new about Lord Ellaby?" asked Annie, coolly.

"Well, not exactly new; they have said, for some time, that he was going to be married."

"Oh, is that all? I have heard vague reports of the kind myself. We shall see. But don't you dance? Shall I find you a

partner? Mr. Beaufort will be happy if you will accept his hand."

"Mrs. Annesley, indulge me, pray, by telling me who that beautiful girl was whom I saw here this morning," said a young man, approaching Annie.

"My sister, my younger sister," replied Annie, her face lighting up with its old expression of tender, sisterly love.

"But she is not here to night?"

"No; she is rather delicate, and not fond of a crowd. She prefers the solitude of her dressing-room, where she may dream of her absent husband and children."

"Husband and children! can she be married?"

"Yes," said Annie, smiling; and she added, fervently, "Thank God, her husband is one who, like herself, lives above this empty world. You look surprised, to hear a poor, whimsical pleasure-lover like myself speak thus; but I assure you I can admire what I have no intention of imitating. My sister is an angelic spirit, and the happiest of mortals."

"I thought you were the happiest."

"I! Oh yes, of course, I am extremely happy, but quite in another way, you know. Pray excuse my leaving you; I see a very old friend coming in, one whom I knew in less prosperous days. Do you know Dr. Sinclair? he is very, very good, but eccentric. I value him beyond everything; he is the only man I know who ever tells me I am wrong! Ah, my dear Doctor, how kind of you to come!"

"I did not come to see *you*," growled the Doctor; "I came to see Ellen. Where is she? you don't want me!"

"Ellen is in her dressing-room; but I tell you I do want you. Just feel my pulse."

"I shall do nothing of the kind! I will never attempt to prescribe for you, while you lead this life."

"Come, come, Doctor, don't scold. I am going to alter my ways; indeed I am, some day."

"And meanwhile you're destroying yourself, turning day into night, and night into day! I hear you dance till two in the morning, and sit up till sunrise, writing your

•

trashy novels, that hav'n't one grain of sense in them !”

“ Yet you seem to have read my trashy novels ?”

“ Yes ; like swallowing a bitter pill ! I'll tell you what—you have never been good for anything since you went among those whiskered foreigners. I knew it would come to no good, when you crossed the water ; I told you so, you know I did !”

“ Doctor ! Doctor ! you are really insufferable !”

“ And you ? What are you ? An empty-headed woman, with all your boasted abilities, and your genius, forsooth. I say, what is that fellow doing for ever at your elbow ?”

“ What fellow ?”

“ Why, that descendant of the Lumley family, of whom Adam was a younger son, that Curzon !”

“ Oh, Lord Ellaby ! Do give him his new title ; it is so pretty ! What is he doing ? really I don't know—shall we ask him ?”

“Annie Sherwood! Annie Sherwood!” said the old man, solemnly, his voice softened from his usual asperity.

Annie started to be called by the old familiar name; it brought back with it so many old feelings and situations; half forgotten, wholly buried. “Don’t call me by that name!” said she, in a voice of hurried agitation. “Do you remember when Ruth’s mother-in-law says—‘Call me not Naomi, but Marah?’ Not pleasant, but bitter. Bitter things have been written against me, as they were against Naomi! But come, Doctor, let us go and see Ellen.”

“You need not come; I don’t want you; you may stay with your fine company.”

“But I mean to come!” and Annie took the old Doctor’s reluctant arm, and led him to her sister. “As kind as ever, dear Doctor!” said Ellen, with an affectionate smile, and putting both her hands into those of her old friend.

“And so you came up to consult me, Ellen!” said he, very differently to the way in which he had spoken to Annie.

"Not exactly," said Ellen, hesitating. "I came up partly to peep at Annie, and to coax her into spending a few weeks with us; it is so long since we have been together!"

"Very long," said Annie, with a deep sigh. "I told you, dear Ellen, that our paths were wide apart."

"Oh! pray—pray don't say so, Annie! Doctor, do—do talk to Annie; do persuade her!"

"I persuade her! a very likely story. I tell you she's as obstinate as half a dozen mules put together! I wash my hands clear of all her concerns."

"No, you wont," said Annie, laughing; "so you need not attempt it; and what is more, Doctor, you will never succeed in making me angry with you. But pray let us say no more about my going down into the country. It is quite impossible for me to leave London. I have too many engagements there; indeed, business of the utmost importance. Besides, rural life would not at all suit me in my present humour; and though I don't say exactly 'Oh, odious,

odious trees !' like Lady Montagu's woman, I have no wish to renew my acquaintance with any other arborium than the painted one at the Opera. I assure you, they are done to the life, and one enjoys country scenes without getting sunburnt in going after them. A moment's truce, Doctor, and see what is the matter with Ellen."

"Nothing beyond a little nervousness produced by anxiety," said the Doctor. "My prescription for her is to give you up."

"I believe you are right," said Annie ; but with so sad a voice and look, that it brought tears into the eyes of her sister, who threw her arms round her, and embraced her almost convulsively, while she exclaimed, "Rather would I part with life, dear as life has now become to me !"

"No ; she will never give me up !" said Annie, looking up at the stern old man with a gleam of joy and pride. "Come what will, I have always a refuge in Ellen's heart ; and while that is open to me, heaven's own gate is not finally shut ! I shall come to you one day, Ellen ; I shall come one day—

I know I shall ; perhaps soon ; at present, you must leave me to a wayward destiny."

"Well, I must be gone," said the Doctor, rising, "and of course Mrs. Annesley is going back to her fine company."

"No, I am not going back yet," said Annie. "They will not be offended at my absence. They are nearly all literary people, or artists, and, like myself, dispense with ceremonious observances. I often run away from my guests for an hour or two, and write a chapter ; no one thinks it strange. Don't go yet, Doctor ; pray don't ; it makes me think of dear old times to see you sit there beside Ellen ; only I miss the little parlour in N—— Street, with its clean, shabby furniture, and——"

"A pity you weren't there now !" muttered the Doctor.

"I say Amen !" responded Annie. "Ah ! I was much happier then ! Do you remember, Ellen, the evening I brought home my first bundle of work from Wilson's ?"

"Ah ! yes," sighed Ellen ; "how happy we were then, Annie !"

"Happy, indeed!" said Annie; "though in the midst of poverty and privation. There is nothing absolutely heart-breaking in undeserved misfortunes—troubles in which no self-reproach mingles. In privations such as those we endured, a little help, never so small a relief, seems a countless hoard."

"I wonder what has become of the Wilsons!" said Ellen. "The poor man went to prison. I have often thought of him since. He was so grateful to you for saving his child! I don't think you ever heard all about what Annie did, Doctor," added Ellen, ready to burst forth with a glowing tale.

"Oh yes, Ellen, the Doctor knows it by heart. You have told him the story twenty times over. Poor Wilson managed to get clear of his embarrassments, and is now in a flourishing business in Oxford Street."

"How did it come about?" asked Ellen, eagerly.

"Oh, some friend helped him!"

"Who could it be?"

"He says it was done anonymously. He has never been able to discover his bene-

factor. No doubt it was some sinner labouring under the delusion that alms-giving is atonement and expiation."

"It was you, Annie; I am sure it was."

"Ah! you think the description of the sinner suits me, then?"

"The act suits you," said Ellen, fondly.

"You see, Doctor, you can't hope to make Ellen give me up! Fire and the sword would fail in doing it, as they fail in extirpating heresy. Here she is, endowing me with all the virtues of a Dorcas," said Annie.

"And you are always misrepresenting yourself, denying or veiling all the good you do, and magnifying every trivial error," said Ellen. "I want you to do yourself justice."

"None can think more harshly of me than I do of myself," said Annie. "The other day, I was in one of the most desolate regions of this benighted city, trying to relieve the most aggravated wants of some of its inhabitants. In one of those dismal dens of vice and misery I met a good man—I knew he was good, by the unmistakeable character of his countenance. He seemed

pleased to see a lady in such a locality—spoke of the good I might effect, and offered me a bundle of tracts to distribute in similar places. I felt constrained to refuse them. He looked hurt; not offended, but grieved. Perhaps he thought me proud; he could not guess that I refused, because I felt utterly unworthy to be the bearer of anything beyond mere physical relief to the poor. Poor, good man!—he looked so sorrowful, I could not forbear turning back and telling him the truth. He smiled kindly at me, and answered, ‘Thou art not far from the kingdom of Heaven.’ How little he knew me, Ellen!”

“Say, rather, how much better he knew you than you knew yourself!” said Ellen.

“No, indeed he did not know me, dear Ellen; nor do you. I had once good impulses, and a high sense of honour; but I have verified that ‘l’expérience du monde brise le cœur, ou le bronze!’ My heart was too proud and stubborn to be broken; so it is hardened, like the nether millstone. But let us talk of something pleasant.”

"Oh yes, do!" said the Doctor—"of Mr. Curzon!"

"Don't call him so!" cried Annie, hastily; "that name is hateful to me."

"The Curzons were very unkind to Annie," said Ellen, apologetically.

"And yet she lets this fellow hang about her!" said the Doctor.

"You are wrong to speak of him thus, Doctor," said Annie; "Lord Ellaby is the most harmless creature living; he has not wit enough to be wicked, and his pomposity rather amuses than galls those about him."

"But I thought Ellen said they ill-treated you."

"Not he," said Annie. "I was two years in his house before he took any more notice of me than he did of the scullery-maid."

"Then it was Madame Juno!" said the Doctor.

"Oh, don't—don't talk of her!" said Annie, with an involuntary shudder. "You proposed a pleasant subject!"

"Annie! dear Annie! do tell me," said Ellen, when the sisters were alone; "tell

me, is there any truth in the report that you allow Lord Ellaby to be almost constantly with you?"

"And if it be true, Ellen, what then?"

"It will strengthen the belief that you mean to marry him!"

"Nonsense, nonsense, Ellen! the world is doting!"

"But you would not—surely you would not marry him, Annie?"

"I will think about it, and let you know when he asks me!"

"Oh, Annie! the very thought of such a marriage makes me shudder!"

"Indeed, dear! It has a contrary effect on me. It makes my heart dance joyfully! You are unkind, Ellen, not to wish me a coronet."

"Promise me, Annie—oh, do promise me——"

"To think over it? Of course I will. Good night, dear child; sleep and happy dreams! I must go to my company!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A WEDDING,—but this is not a joyous one. The bride looks cold and uninterested in the ceremony. The bridegroom has a knitted brow, and a sort of air which says, “I defy the opinions of the world!” while all the time he is writhing under the possibility of being ostracised. Yet the wedding has been splendidly appointed, and the guests are numerous.

A year and a day are gone since the same bride stood at the same altar, and took the same vows. Death had dispensed her from their fulfilment, ere an hour had passed for their echo to die away. Would it be thus again? No, no!—the bridegroom is not a worn-out old man, but one in the vigorous prime of life and strength. The unloved bridegroom will cling to her through life, and perhaps see the grass grow green upon

her grave. And yet she shuddered not at having made the sacrifice. She would have shrunk from nothing that could wring a pang from Adelaide Curzon. There is nothing stronger than a woman's hate, unless it be a woman's love.

A smile of dark meaning—a smile quite unwonted for him—passed over the face of the bridegroom when the irrevocable words were once spoken. He knows something of Claude Douglas's real love, and feels that his own wrongs will be avenged when he hears who bears the title of the Countess of Ellaby.

Several friends, and a few relations who had reasons for obliging Lord Ellaby, were present, at his request. The reasons which made them consent to sanction the marriage with their presence were strong enough to induce them to show at least outward civility to the *parvenu* bride, who was, nevertheless, at the same time undergoing the censorship of envy and ill-nature.

How well did Annie discern their thoughts ; how well she knew the remarks

that were passing on her ! but how little did she feel the tiny stings that assailed her, whether from the dilated nostril of pride or the curling lip of contempt ! The calm, quiet dignity, which no one better knew how to wear, made her appear utterly unconscious that any one was observing her at all, while it quite dispersed the preconceived notion that she would be dazzled by her elevation.

* * * *

And now the happy bride and bridegroom have left their friends behind them, to carp, cavil, and criticise ! Lord Ellaby handed his bride into the carriage, entered, and seated himself beside her. For some time he seemed lost in thought ; woke up at last, and called her "Miss Sherwood !" started, coloured, and made a blundering apology.

"It is not necessary to apologize, Mr. Curzon," said Annie, laughing, "for Mr. Curzon you will always be to me ; nothing more nor less ! Miss Sherwood I shall always be to you ; your children's governess,

once deemed unworthy of your aristocratic notice!"

"Why will you recal such painful things, Octavia?" for by her second and higher sounding name Lord Ellaby chose to call his wife.

"I will tell you when we get to Paris, my Lord."

"What is this caprice for?" exclaimed Lord Ellaby, with the petulance of a school-boy, as Annie withdrew a hand on which he had sentimentally seized.

"I will tell you when we get to Paris, my Lord," she once more replied. Then, with much the same look with which she had been accustomed to quell a school-room rebel, she handed a book to Lord Ellaby.

"Be so good as to look through that book, my Lord. I shall be glad to know your opinion of it—when I wake!" and Laby Ellaby closed her eyes and slept!

The bridegroom did what he was bidden, very much like a child who had an appointed task. Only now and then he looked at the face of his companion, its firm, broad brow

slightly knitted, its peculiarly cut lips, its chin, such as no woman ever had without possessing a most determined will; and though he said nothing, his own face plainly spoke thus: "Humph! I shall not dare to say my soul's my own, I suppose! But she is a charming creature, nevertheless, and born to tread on necks. Not exactly handsome,—but, how everybody admires her! Then, what a mind she has! How universally her works are read. I wonder whether they will think she meant Fitzorme for me! (Fitzorme was Annie's last and most charming hero.) I wonder whether she *did* mean him for me! Let me see; she makes him to be in Parliament, and about my height; dark, too, a little younger than I am; but then I don't look my age, and she does not know it. Certainly she appreciates my talents! Dear me! it seems only yesterday that she cut that piece out of the newspaper, with my speech in it! How many things have happened since then!"—and here Lord Ellaby looked sad and care-worn enough to show that he had really suffered; but he

soon resumed his cogitations. "I wonder what *she* will say to it! (he meant Adelaide). If anything will touch her, my marriage will, though she never pretended to love me. And on him—on him my revenge is yet more complete!"—and Lord Ellaby actually gnashed his teeth at these thoughts. "Besides," he mentally continued, "I am rewarding the sincere attachment which Octavia has shown me in a thousand ways; and if she is a little coy, she only looks the more charming for it. In a day or two she will be less afraid of me!" Afraid of you! Ah, poor Lord! did your bride read your thoughts under her closed eyelids, that her lip curled into a smile of the most ineffable contempt? Go on with your book; she does not choose you to look at her, and somehow your thoughts (you know they have) have travelled back to the starting point. "Well, I suppose I sha'n't dare to say my soul's my own!" Unfortunate nobleman! Poor deluded peer of the realm! You are not alone; a coronet rests on the brow of many a henpecked husband!

CHAPTER XIV.

A RAINY day in Paris is dull as a rainy day anywhere else. So thought Lord Ellaby, as he walked up and down one of the most magnificent apartments in Meurice's Hotel. He was alone. Lady Ellaby was writing in her dressing-room ; she had notified that she could not receive him—could not see him at all till dinner-time. They had not met since their arrival, even to exchange a word. They had travelled day and night from London at the bride's request, and her requests, though uttered in the gentlest, most measured voice, had usually the character of a command. She had already seized the reins, and the bridegroom thought that she meant to continue to hold them.

Lord Ellaby, as he paced up and down the room, raised his eyebrows, and revolved various little dignified speeches which he



meant to make to his wife, but which assuredly he never would find courage to utter. Then he took more hasty strides, and, as he did so, bit his nails. It is quite a fallacy to suppose that well-bred people never bite their nails, though mammas, and aunts, and governesses, are always trying to impress that erroneous opinion on the young heirs of creation. Yes, Lord Ellaby bit his in a very sullen humour, and prognosticated that Lady Adelaide's sway had been nothing to that which Lady Ellaby's would be if he did not assert a becoming and dignified degree of authority; he certainly *ought* to do so, and he certainly *would* do so; he would show Octavia that he was not to be trifled with, &c.

At dinner nothing could be more charming than the bride. She evidently was intent on pleasing, and her sparkling animation dispersed the shadows on his Lordship's brow, in an incredibly short space of time.

"Dearest Octavia!" said Lord Ellaby, seating himself beside his smiling wife, when he had joined her in the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XIV.

A RAINY day in Paris is dull as a rainy day anywhere else. So thought Lord Ellaby, as he walked up and down one of the most magnificent apartments in Meurice's Hotel. He was alone. Lady Ellaby was writing in her dressing-room ; she had notified that she could not receive him—could not see him at all till dinner-time. They had not met since their arrival, even to exchange a word. They had travelled day and night from London at the bride's request, and her requests, though uttered in the gentlest, most measured voice, had usually the character of a command. She had already seized the reins, and the bridegroom thought that she meant to continue to hold them.

Lord Ellaby, as he paced up and down the room, raised his eyebrows, and revolved various little dignified speeches which he

meant to make to his wife, but which assuredly he never would find courage to utter. Then he took more hasty strides, and, as he did so, bit his nails. It is quite a fallacy to suppose that well-bred people never bite their nails, though mammas, and aunts, and governesses, are always trying to impress that erroneous opinion on the young heirs of creation. Yes, Lord Ellaby bit his in a very sullen humour, and prognosticated that Lady Adelaide's sway had been nothing to that which Lady Ellaby's would be if he did not assert a becoming and dignified degree of authority; he certainly *ought* to do so, and he certainly *would* do so; he would show Octavia that he was not to be trifled with, &c.

At dinner nothing could be more charming than the bride. She evidently was intent on pleasing, and her sparkling animation dispersed the shadows on his Lordship's brow, in an incredibly short space of time.

"Dearest Octavia!" said Lord Ellaby, seating himself beside his smiling wife, when he had joined her in the drawing-room.

"Dearest Octavia!" and he approached with the intention of embracing her most tenderly.

"My Lord!" exclaimed the bride, eluding his embrace very quietly, and rising from the sofa; "My Lord!" and she looked at him fixedly, without a frown, indeed, but with a cold, chilling air, that drove him back from her ten times more than anger would have done.

"Octavia!" said his Lordship, looking very much as if he were corporeally stung.

"Plain Anne, at your service, Lord Ellaby: if you call me 'Octavia,' I shall fancy you mistake my character. I am plain Anne, Anne Sherwood still, *jusqu'aux bouts des ongles!* But I promised you an explanation in Paris; I am ready to give one."

"Then, in the name of common sense, is this farce to continue, madam?"

"Yes, my Lord, if it is agreeable to you."

"But it is not at all agreeable to me; if we are to live on these terms, why did you marry me? By Heaven, I shall begin to think you never loved me!"

"Loved *you!*" repeated Annie, three several times, and each time with an increasing emphasis of wonder and scorn, while she seemed measuring the littleness of the soul in her presence. "Oh! surely you never, never thought such a thing! Did I say so—did I ever say so, my Lord?"

"A thousand times, by act, look, and tone!"

"But by *words*, never. No, my soul is clean of that falsehood! I would it were as white from other sins!"

Lord Ellaby paced the room with rapid strides, stopped, looked at Annie, resumed his walk, and at last exclaimed, "Then a second time I have been the aim of a mercenary woman's search for fortune!"

"Not so, my Lord," said Annie, very calmly; "in that supposition you wrong me, and forget that my fortune more than equalled yours; nor did I ever suggest any settlements which would have secured it for my own use. Money is beneath my ambition."

"Then it was this miserable title!"

"It was not that," said Annie, slowly.

“Speak, then, speak!” cried Lord Ellaby, passionately; “say why you have made me the most wretched of men, as you are the most forsworn of women. What was it for?”

“For—revenge!” said Annie Sherwood, in so deep and unnatural a tone, that Lord Ellaby started and stood still, and the two were face to face, each looking into the other’s eyes. “Listen!” said Annie, in a voice whose very calmness was that of concentrated passion. “They say, if you tread upon a worm, it will turn and sting you—if it can! it must be crushed, annihilated, if you would not have it turn. My Lord, I was the dependent of your rich mansion, the slave of your proud wife—if you will, your servant! The most loathed beggar craving alms at your gate was not treated with the scorn I was!”

“Not by me, I swear, never by me!”

“Yes, by you, my Lord,—by all! All! from the pampered menial, up to the proud, beautiful lady, who trampled on me as if I had no human feelings—as if the governess

were a thing, without the life-blood that fills other veins—without the pulse that makes other hearts beat with love, pride, joy, or sorrow! The wretch into whose cell no ray of sunshine bursts, upon whose solitary ear the music of the human voice never sounds, was not more lonely, scarcely more wretched than I. The gloom and austerity of the convent were mine—not mine its sanctity and repose! And this, all this, I bore—and fulfilled my duty to your heartless, unloving children; nor did I ever seek to retaliate on them the refined cruelty exercised on myself. And this—this was not enough——”

“And to revenge these petty slights,” said Lord Ellaby, with a look that would have been contempt, had he dared to show contempt to that resolute woman; “to revenge these petty slights, shared in common with——”

“Shared in common with almost all my unfortunate class,” said Annie. “But you are wrong, Lord Ellaby,—as ever, wide of the true mark! No, no; not for this! This

systematic cruelty—this studied inhumanity—woke up all the slumbering strength of my soul. I saw dozens, ay, hundreds, of women, with hearts, souls, and minds, trampled on worse, even worse than I was, and that—*shame upon them—by their own sex!* I knew that from some indignant heart would burst forth a cry of wrong and injury, that would tinge many a cheek, unaccustomed to blush, with the crimson of public shame. I felt within me the power to lift up that cry—felt that mine was the strong voice that would utter it some day. And when my heart (it could feel then) was full to overflowing, my desires for vengeance never went beyond the hope of exposing a wrong that cries to heaven as much, at least as much, as the groans of the black slave sweating to death in the cotton fields of South Carolina. For the *black* slaves a trumpet voice had risen; a voice that might wake the dead. I said, Shall no one *dare to speak for the white slaves of free England?* and I resolved to gird up my strength and speak for them; perchance I

might be the instrument to rescue the suffering from the oppressors, 'on whose side was power!' My talents, my life, my whole being were to be devoted to that purpose."

"Pray go on, Madam; I believe you have yet more to say," said Lord Ellaby, folding his arms, and leaning against the chimney-piece.

"I have more to say, my Lord," said Annie. "At the time I speak of, your house had become insupportable to me; I resolved to leave it. There was a man once who grew fond of his dungeon, because a bird had come to dwell with him in it, and had given him something to love—and even so, when all human feeling seemed fast perishing within me, from oppression and ill-treatment, God sent a ray of Heaven's own sunshine and glory to light my soul, and my prison became a palace. *His* love came to me; and to live in the light of that love I would have spent eternity upon the rack;—so I remained in your house. He loved me, and I returned to all the confiding tender-

ness of untried girlhood. But I was your wife's dependent—the despised governess! Some fiend whispered the remembrance in his ear, stung his family pride with the thoughts it suggested, and he—he who had been to me instead of God, upon whose honour I would have staked my soul—ashamed to make the *governess* his wife, insulted me by the proposition of becoming his mistress! The position was good enough for—for a governess! She who had been treated as a menial in Mr. Curzon's house, had no right to aspire to anything better!

“I met his proposals with the scorn they merited; but I loved him—loved him still; madly loved him; and in the struggle to uproot that love my reason nearly forsook me. And he—he loved me too! He repented of the wrong he had done me—bitterly repented of it; and overcoming his false pride, was coming back to be reconciled to honour and to me—when she,—she, your wife—like an incarnate Satan, snatched him from me by her demoniac cunning, and made of him the slave of her licentious will: the

renegade from honour, virtue, and all things sacred to God and his holy angels! I had but one treasure in the wide world," continued Annie, passionately, and dashing away the tears that would start to her proud eye—"his love, his precious love! She robbed me of it, and made me what I am! In my despairing misery I gave myself to that poor wretched old man—for my revenge I gave myself to you!"

"To revenge yourself on that accursed villain! doubly, doubly accursed may he be!" exclaimed Ellaby.

"No, no; not on him—on her! Her heart I could not reach; she has none; but I knew that she would writhe at my wearing the title that she has forfeited."

"And so you made of me the stepping-stone, the tool?"

"I did; but not in revenge on you, my Lord. You, I pity! You have always seemed to me more weak than wicked! I am sorry to have had no other means of attaining my object, sorry that you have been made the victim of others' vices. But

now you must perceive that there is no remedy but patience."

"Patience!" repeated the infuriated aristocrat, accompanying the exclamation with a very strong addition, which need not be repeated. "Patience!—patience! Do you talk to me of patience, after the insults and injuries you have heaped upon me?"

"I do talk to you of patience, my Lord," said Annie, calmly; "and I remind you, that when your wife, the mother of your children,—the woman you had once fondly loved, to whom you would have sacrificed anything in barter for her love,—when she abandoned you and her offspring, you had something more to forgive than now!"

"Does any one dare to say I have forgiven her?" cried Lord Ellaby, furiously.

"I suppose you have, since you are preparing a triumph for her!"

"Be more explicit, madam."

"I will. Do you think it will be no matter of exultation to her—to him—to know that dissensions have already risen between you and me?—dissensions which, if

they continue, will inevitably lead to a public separation. Now listen to me, my Lord—calmly, if you can. I know I am not your wife in the eyes of Heaven; for, to make a marriage, God must be the priest, and join hearts and souls. Are ours joined? No; I am not your wife; I will not live dishonoured. I have vowed to Heaven that none shall ever touch the lips on which the kisses of Claude Douglas are not yet cold, though our love be in ashes. Mine is not a spirit to turn away from the banquet of the gods and feast on carrion! I am not your wife; I never will be! But your interests, as well as mine, such as they are, make it desirable that the masquerade should continue. Let us, at least, appear on good terms. I have not one feeling of ill-will towards you; on the contrary, I am sorry for you, as I said before—heartily sorry. You shall not find me in the world's eyes beneath the dignity to which you have raised me. You shall never have to blush for the woman who bears your name. If I am cold to you, I will be at least as true as cold, and true to

my own proud heart. I will never fail willingly in any actual duty to you or your children; I will be better to them than the mother they have lost: I have been so already. Yet more, I aim at exercising no petty feminine tyranny. You shall be master in your own house (a fact of which your looks often express a doubt); and provided you make no further absurd pretensions to the character of a lover, we shall, I am sure, be friends. Come, it is a compact; we will shake hands. Let me go on reading *Ancillon* to you;—where did we leave off?”

CHAPTER XV.

"LORD ELLABY has taken the box you wanted, for the season, Flora," said the Marquis of —— to his very fashionable wife.

"Dear me ! has he ? how tiresome ! To resign it to any one on G——'s last nights would be tiresome : but when we think of the low creature that is to figure in it !"

"She is a woman of great genius," said the Hon. Ernest ——, the brother of the Marchioness.

"Pshaw ! you really are quite absurd, Ernest," said the lady, impatiently ; "genius, indeed !—were it true, that would scarcely atone for her effrontery, in thrusting her vulgarity into public. I have not the least doubt but that she will appear in all the colours of the rainbow, and loaded with

jewels wheedled out of that poor silly Ellaby."

"It is impossible for her to be vulgar," said the young man. "*Gaucherie* would be pardonable in a person who has risen from an obscure station. Do you know, Flo', as we are distantly related to Lord Ellaby, I do think we ought to call upon her."

"Call upon her!" exclaimed the lady—"are you mad, Ernest!—do you know what is said of her?"

"Of course I do—every one does; for her name has long been in every one's mouth. They say she was some poor country parson's daughter."

"Ah! but that is nothing compared to the truth. Why, she was actually a sort of *bonne* or governess in the Curzons' family for some years, and like many, indeed most of that sort of people, a complete snake in the grass. It was her vile going on that drove poor Lady Adelaide to make that unhappy *faux pas*."

"That could not be," said Ernest; "she

was Mrs. Annesley months before the elopement took place."

"At all events, every one knows she had a great deal to do with it."

"Yet a great many people visited her as Mrs. Annesley."

"No respectable people, Ernest."

"I beg your pardon; nearly all the known authors and distinguished artists did."

"How absurd to bring them forward as criterions for us!" said the Marchioness. "You know artists and authors are proverbially immoral. Besides, whence do they spring themselves? how very rarely are they well born?"

"Oh Flo'! Flo'! what an admission!" said Ernest, laughing. "So birth and genius are never wedded; I am afraid your compliment to the aristocracy has some foundation; genius seldom is born in noble houses, or nurtured there, if born."

"Ernest, you are a complete radical! I shall expect to hear of your attending a Chartists' meeting one of these days. But

pray, whatever your own inclinations may be, or your own acts, don't ask me to countenance that low woman,—Lady Ellaby I will not call her."

"Do you know, Flo', I am apt to think that she would consider it a condescension to know you or me."

"Don't talk nonsense ; do you know who she puts me in mind of?"

"I really can't say ; Aspasia, perhaps?"

"I don't know any Aspasia," said the Marchioness, looking a little perplexed ; "I suppose you got that name from some opera dancer, or out of an exploded romance. The person I mean is that vile wretch, De Luzy, who set the Duke de Praslin on to murder his wife; she was a governess, you know, and mixed up with the family in some absurd way. Abroad, they don't appear to know how to keep those people in their proper place, as we do in England. If this Mrs. Annesley had been in my house, things would not have gone on as they have ; if she had been my governess, I would have broken her spirit.

"I don't in the least doubt it, Flo'," said the young man, laughing. "By the way, talking of governesses, what a distressing cough that poor creature has, upstairs; it sounds all the way down here, from that attic where you keep her. Why don't you let her come down sometimes?"

"Just like the whole intriguing set!" exclaimed the lady; "trying every cunning artifice to create an interest in them. I'll teach her to sit with her door open! About this woman, Ernest. If you like to call, of course nothing can be said; but for me, you know, it is quite out of the question. And, moreover, I have no intention of finally breaking with Lady Adelaide." .

"You cannot mean that, Flora!"

"Yes; I do mean it. Of course I can't countenance her just at present—at least, not under existing circumstances; but when she is married, and a little time has gone by, I shall certainly see her, if only to get at the bottom of this intrigue. Subsequent events plainly show she was the aggrieved

party. We ought to uphold our own class—it is only womanly in me to do it. Poor Lady Adelaide has been driven to desperation, completely sacrificed for that low-born *intriguante*. One day, no doubt, Lady Adelaide will be Marchioness of Dryburgh. There is no likelihood of the present Marquis having an heir, and he is considered consumptive. Of course Lord Claude will have the marquisate, and then few will remember the *faux pas* of the Marchioness. But while I think of it, Ernest, I must beg that when Miss Elton comes down to luncheon, you wont make yourself so absurd with her, giving her a chair, offering her wine, and all that sort of thing. I can't afford wine for governesses, and she is uppish enough already. She quite fancies herself a beauty."

"Well, you know, Flo', she really is a very pretty girl, and quite lady like and refined in her manners."

"As for her being pretty, it's impossible, with that sallow complexion. That, I don't doubt, she has brought on herself by por-

ing over novels every evening, till I don't know what hour."

"Poor thing! what can she do in her solitude but read?"

"She should improve herself; I have often told her so. She ought all through the evening (which she has quite to herself) to be going over what she is to teach the children next day. These people have no notion of doing their duty faithfully; but if you don't let them go to church twice a day, they begin to whimper and talk of their consciences. As for Miss Elton, I really am sick of scolding her, and my scolding produces nothing but hysterical tears and nervous starts; the children don't seem to get on at all the better for it."

"Then why don't you give up scolding? she's only a girl, Flo', after all."

"Girl! nonsense; she's beginning to turn grey—I have noticed that for some months. Who ever heard of a girl turning grey? Look at my hair!"

"Good-bye," said Ernest. "I've a horse to look at;" and he left the room, with a

cool nod to his sister, mentally soliloquizing, as, no doubt, almost any man would on such occasions, "This sister of mine is a true woman—jealous, envious, and ill-natured. Now, if that poor d—— up-stairs had only had the small pox, or had red hair, she might stand a chance of meeting with a little more humanity. Grey hair! I wonder what Flo's would be, if it wern't dyed; she's twenty years older than that girl! It's no use pitying them, it always makes the women treat them worse; but those governesses are worse off than negroes. Some of the blacks are cared for, as actual 'property;' but these slaves—who cares for them!"

* * * * *

Curiosity overcoming patrician disdain, and yet more, prudent resolves and calculations, the Marchioness of —— actually called on Lady Ellaby! Bitterly disappointed was she to find her most plainly dressed, and without a single ornament; yet more disappointed was she that the *parvenue* neither displayed gratitude for her condescension, nor timidity at her aristocratic

presence, but was only calmly self-possessed. The Marchioness, all the time smiling most urbanely, proceeded to a subject which she was sure must overwhelm Lady Ellaby with mortification and confusion, by reminding her of her origin. "I hear you do a great deal in the way of schools; of course, you are greatly interested on educational questions."

"I ought to be," said Annie, laughing, "considering my experience in governess life."

"Exactly so," said the Marchioness, smiling: "I was saying so the other day at Lord Belmont's, when we were talking of getting up a committee of ladies for a ragged school. I was saying, your experience would be of use to us. But I must ask you a personal favour, dear Lady Ellaby; it is to give me a few hints for my girls; their present governess is extremely unfit for her office, and quite above her station."

"I dare say your Ladyship has read *Madame de Genlis' 'New Æra?'*" said Lady Ellaby.

"Oh, yes; the new work on education: of course; yes,—every one has read it."

"Not quite new," said Annie, with a quiet smile; "and it bears rather indirectly on juvenile education. But let me remind you of a passage, in which some one, by way of recalling to Jules Delmour's mind that his uncle was a jeweller, asks his opinion of a piece of *bijouterie*, which the mischievous hero is so unprofessional as to break—by accident, of course. I fear I should prove equally careless or unskilful, if called upon to supply any educational assistance. Indeed, I believe I was altogether unsuccessful as a governess, and no doubt should have been frequently turned off as 'an unprofitable servant,' only that those I served were too ignorant to discover my deficiencies!"

Lady Ellaby spoke with such *sang-froid* and self-possession, that her tormentor began to think she was invulnerable, and withdrew, very much discomfited, but almost immediately she comforted herself by the determination to wreak on one governess the defeat she

had suffered from another. If there were any one who did not know all the Countess of Ellaby's "antécédents," of course the Marchioness would have the pleasure of relating them at large, and where authentic narrative failed, she could fill up the gaps from imagination. She could, she thought, effectually disappoint the ambitious *parvenue*, if she had any hope of thrusting her way into society. But the Marchioness knew little of the woman on whom she thus speculated; what that woman had resolved, she would do; what Annie Sherwood had undertaken, she would perform.

Though Lady Ellaby faithfully kept her promise of exercising no petty, feminine tyranny in her new husband's house, in anything which she deemed important, she invariably succeeded in having her will and pleasure fulfilled by Lord Ellaby, though her demands were sometimes what he considered outrageous.

One day Lady Ellaby requested his Lordship to procure her presentation at Court.

Lord Ellaby felt and looked too astonished to speak. At last he ejaculated, "Presented!"

"Yes, my Lord. Is there anything astonishing in the idea of your wife appearing at Court?"

"No, certainly, Octavia, but——"

"You think, perhaps, I should not play the great lady well—that I should discredit you; but surely you know by this time that I am a good actress—at least, you should know it!"

"But I tell you, Octavia, it is an impossibility."

"Why, my Lord?"

"Who have you to present you?"

"You will find some one."

"Indeed I cannot."

"My Lord, you *must*." Her imperious Ladyship turned and left the room, without waiting for a reply. Presently she looked in again, saying in her gentlest voice, "Give me the heads of the speech we were talking of, and I will string them together for you."

“Thank you, you are very kind. But about this presentation, Octavia——”

“My Lord, you know my wishes, and I know that they will be fulfilled!”

Lady Ellaby's will was accomplished.

CHAPTER XVI

EVERY eye was fixed on a particular box in the —— Theatre. It remained vacant, however, offering nothing for the gratification of the curious, until the curtain had risen. Then the Earl and Countess of Ellaby entered. The lady seated herself composedly in front of the *loge*; his lordship a little behind her. His manner was affectionate and attentive; hers, quiet and dignified. As they conversed from time to time, Anne's rarely beautiful smile lit her face, and she seemed to love the husband of her choice.

Once more Lady Ellaby's appearance disappointed expectation. Her dress was simple, very transparent white, without the smallest ornament, not even the garniture which women call "trimmings," while her black hair was wreathed round her head



with classic taste. The *tout ensemble* was irreproachable elegance.

Of course, there was plenty of staring, from those whose high breeding exempted them from the observance of common politeness, and countless glasses were levelled at the box of Lord Ellaby.

Lord Ellaby bore it well—most wonderfully well. He had caught a portion of the determination of the resolute spirit beside him; he did not now wince beneath a glance; he did not frown at a raised eyebrow; his old haughtiness was mere child's play to the self-reliant look he now wore. The whole man was transformed: he had expanded into something larger than himself; his little weaknesses were hidden; people no longer found him prosy; some began to admire him; he was animated by a strange fire; and he was proudly conscious of the change wrought in him by the influence of a superior mind.

Smilingly Lord Ellaby presented a glass to his wife. As smilingly she took it, and with the greatest *sang-froid*, she looked

round the house, making her survey slowly, her countenance all the while unmoved. She then turned her face towards the stage, and from that moment seemed to have forgotten everything but the performance.

"Shameless effrontery!" said a lady of rank; and nearly all the women said the same.

Women are always severe on their own sex; men are more tolerant, if not more charitable. Besides, they usually admire a woman who has had the misfortune to achieve notoriety.

So the men admired Anne Sherwood, and talked of her grace, her elegance, her beauty! Yes; the very men, who if they had seen her under other circumstances, would have named her "an ugly dowdy!"

No one admired her more than Lord Ellaby. He was proud of his wife; and she, like Gallio of old, "cared for none of these things." For her there existed but two objects in the wide universe—Claude and Adelaide. For those two only she lived; for those two alone, went through



the bitter mockery of a life—one continued masquerade. What was the rest of the world to her? Nothing, absolutely nothing; except that their sayings—their remarks—might reach Claude, and touch his heart; or might sound as a knell in the ears of Adelaide. For this Anne Sherwood led a life of inward torture. And she bore all proudly—calmly—as the Titan on the rock bore the gnawing vulture.

Lady Ellaby's face was turned towards the stage; but it was merely to appear careless of the audience, not in reality to listen to the play; she had no thought of listening. But insensibly the voice of the gifted actor spoke to her heart; her heart so full of despairing love, of jealousy, of revenge, that it seemed no other emotions could enter there. Mr. C—— K—— is, perhaps, the only living actor who thoroughly realizes one's idea of *Hamlet*. There is a world of mingled majesty and tenderness in his look and tone sometimes. Annie had never seen him before: to her it was not acting—it was living, breathing reality. Her eye and ear

were fixed—charmed. She forgot everything else but *Hamlet*; forgot Claude, Adelaide, love, jealousy, revenge—all! all! and when Mr. K—— uttered the one word, “father!” which no one else ever pronounced as he does—“father!” it conjured up before the rapt listener and gazer the image of her own saint-like father, as he had died, martyr-like at the altar, and she burst into a passion of tears. It was long, very long, since she had wept.

Lady Ellaby had forgotten the hundreds of eyes that were prying into her very heart; and the world—the world thought her emotion acting.

Lord Ellaby turned to Annie with affectionate anxiety. His attentions woke her from her abstraction, and she returned to herself—to her world. Nor did she lose her self-possession again, till the words vibrated on her ears—

“And I, the most unfortunate of ladies,
That sucked the honied music of his vows!”

Then once more her emotion became uncon-



trollable. A slight frown bent Lord Ellaby's brows, as he rose and led his wife from the box. "Forgive me, my Lord! this shall never happen again!" said Annie. Those were the first humble words she had ever addressed to Lord Ellaby. He was a very good-natured man, was touched, and readily forgave her.

As they were leaving the house, two men were also going forth: they came from the pit: both wore cloaks. "Waldo, I will speak to her! Free my arm—I will speak!" exclaimed one.

"How dare you!" said the other. "Surely, you have wronged Lord Ellaby enough!" The first speaker replied by a groan, and allowed himself to be led away passively. The two men walked together some distance, and then entered an hotel of some note. As soon as they were within the spacious and cold-looking, though splendid apartment which awaited them, one threw off his cloak, and sank on a chair. His countenance was pale and haggard, his hair disordered, and his dress neglected in

the extreme; yet it was unmistakeably Claude Douglas. "I have seen her again," he muttered, through his clenched teeth; "I have seen her again, and she is still mine—mine, heart and soul—I know it! I read it at a glance!"

"Douglas, remember to-morrow: remember to-morrow's duties!" said Waldo, almost sternly.

"Let me have some respite from such a bitter remembrance!" said Claude. "Let me at least think of her!"

"No, I will not. You have no right to think of her, and she is a guilty woman if she remembers you!"

"You are an unmerciful, inhuman torturer!"

"No; I am your best friend. The past cannot be recalled—banish it at once!"

"Banish it! Well, I will." He approached the table on which stood wine, and filling a large silver goblet with Burgundy, drained it completely. "Now," said he, laughing, "I shall be myself! Do you remember the scene in the *Decamerone*,

where—but why do you look so sad and severe, Waldo? I must teach you, *amico mio*,

‘Cueillons, cueillons la rose au matin de la vie!’

The quotation is from the immaculate Lamartine; even you, stern moralist, must approve of him!”

“*Il buono è il bello!*” said Waldo.

“So thought I once!” said Claude, with a sigh. “By-the-bye, do you know André Chénier? I don’t mean the hacknied “*Jeune Captive*,” &c., but those charming little pastoral bits that sound so Greek (André’s mother was a Greek.) One begins—

‘Jeune berger aux yeux mourants et à la voix tendre,
Cessee à mes baisers, cessez enfin de prétendre;
Non berger je ne puis, je n’en ai point pour toi,
Ils sont tous à Mœris——’

The remembrance was suggested by—no matter what! Will you go with me to-morrow?”

“To church? Yes, if you wish it.”

“No, no; I don’t mean that—I mean after it is all over.”

“Where can you mean, then?”

"till he became her pupil; till she animated his cold mind with a few sparks from her own, till she stirred up his languid energies, as she once stirred mine."

"And you think, then, that the very devotion of her thoughts and energies to her husband's improvement is no proof of love?"

"Do not speak of him as her husband!" cried Claude, fiercely. "I will not, cannot bear it. She is mine, mine eternally! Did I not tell you she was? Oh, Waldo! Waldo!" he continued, "you do not know—you cannot conceive what I suffer. Tortures of remorse, jealousy, despair! Life is unendurable! And to think that this woman, with a heart and mind so transcendently superior to all I ever knew—so tenderly devoted to me, too—to think that I should have insulted, and driven her to what I shudder to think of—and only, only because I had not courage to give my name to one the world would think beneath me in social position. Yet I loved her, Waldo! I loved her madly. I would have given my life for her; ay, my very soul!" and burying his

face in his hands, the unhappy man gave way to a passion of grief. For a few minutes he yielded to it, then said, with a sort of bitter calmness, "But it was the fault of society!"

"Society!" repeated Waldo, with indignation. "If Lady Ellaby was the woman you describe, what could society give you in exchange for the sacrifice you made to its prejudices?"

"But," said Claude, "I was afraid——"

"Oh, coward fear!" cried Waldo. "But, Douglas, you must consider her position, and your own! The miserable mistake you have made, you must be content to forget. Think rather of the duties that bind her to Lord Ellaby, those which you owe to that wretched Lady Adelaide."

"She is not wretched," said Claude, sharply; "she has neither heart nor conscience to suffer. It was she tempted me to my destruction. I never loved, never even admired her. She sought, she ensnared, ruined me, overcame my few weak principles of honour and rectitude, and all, all for the

fiendish purpose of torturing poor Annie. She has confessed that and more to me, and exults in her success! And am I to be tied to this woman for life? I loathe her, detest the sight of her face, the sound of her voice!"

"But yet you have no right to abandon her after what has passed."

"Waldo, you talk calmly and coldly, like the chorus in the ancient dramas!—You cannot enter into my feelings. I would rather be manacled to a corpse than live with her! Listen," he added, more calmly. "I will tell you what I have done. She is merely marrying me to get my name and money, and to patch up her reputation. She tells me all this, and glories in it. The money she is welcome to—all, if she pleases. I used to spend some of it well once; but I am no longer worthy to be the almoner of Providence, it would now seem hypocrisy. I wrote to her this morning, and gave her the option of remaining with me, on condition that she consents to my dropping the bauble before my name directly after the marriage, and to

spend the rest of our lives in absolute retirement, as Mr. and Mrs. Douglas. Otherwise I am quite resolved that we part for ever at the church door, the moment the ceremony is over. A few hours will bring me her reply, I suppose."

"At what o'clock must you be at the church."

"At a quarter to ten. I was determined to be early, to avoid all gazers."

"I shall go with you, certainly," said Waldo, with emotion; "but it is already three, we have not many hours before us. Do go and get some rest, Douglas."

"Rest!" said Claude, despairingly; "who talks of rest to me?"

"At least go and lie down for a little time."

"Impossible; but don't let me keep you from sleeping. Here, Waldo," he continued, with a quivering lip, "take these two letters, and if I go to Scotland alone, directly I am gone, carry the one with the black seal to Lady Ellaby—to Annie; don't post it, carry it yourself, put it in her hands.

The other is for you, but not yet, not till I have gone to Scotland."

Despite his agitation, or, perhaps, in consequence of it, Claude shortly after sank into a sleep, but his features were every now and then distorted with the traces of passionate emotion, and his bosom heaved with deep, struggling sighs. He slept on easily till the clock struck nine. All the time of his sleeping, Waldo had sat beside the couch watching him with eyes that betokened the deepest interest. Reluctantly he woke Claude, when admonished by the hour that it was more than time to prepare for the saddest bridal to which bridegroom ever went. "Why do you wake me?" said Claude, sharply; "I was dreaming I was in Brussels, or near it, in the Bois-de-la-Cambre. I was cutting Annie's name on a tree: we were like a happy boy and girl, and had made an Eden for ourselves. Why did you wake me?"

"It is time," said Waldo.

"For what?" asked Claude.

"To prepare."

"I don't understand you!"

"You said you had appointed a quarter to ten, Douglas."

"Oh yes, to be sure; yes, for my merry wedding. How the fiends will laugh!"

"Douglas, you must go and dress."

"Dress! I am well dressed; what more would you have?"

"You know you cannot appear as you are."

"Why, Waldo?"

"It would be an insult to—"

"Well, I shall see about it presently. I assure you Annie won't mind. She is above all this sort of trickery; from her I learnt to despise it. I am so drowsy. That wine last night.—I remember drinking deeply. Let me sleep." And he fell off again into a heavy slumber, from which Waldo found it impossible to awake him even for his wedding, and the hour was fast approaching.

Waldo looked at the letters; one was thick and heavy, addressed to the Countess of Ellaby, but in an unsteady hand; the other was shorter, and directed to himself.

Something impelled Waldo to open it. He had a presentiment of the contents. They proved to be directions for the management of Claude Douglas's affairs after his death, and a few earnest though incoherent expressions of gratitude for his friendship.

A dreadful suspicion crossed Waldo's mind that Claude had swallowed poison in the deep, full goblet of wine which he had quaffed so eagerly but a few hours before. There stood the goblet on the table; Waldo hastily snatched it, poured the dregs that remained into his mouth, and tasted, as he thought, something metallic. In an agony of apprehension he rushed to Claude to awaken him; but he might as well have hoped to awaken the dead. Still Douglas's lips moved, as if speaking; his hands were clenched, and a purple glow overspread his usually pale face.

Waldo was about to rush forth to obtain assistance, when Heinrich, Claude's valet, entered, with such an air of delight in his honest German face, that Waldo stopped short. "Where is my master!—my master!" he

exclaimed, in good English, and in the most eager haste. "Oh, sir!—oh, Mr. Waldo! such good news. Only think—my Lady's gone and got married to some one else!"

"Thank God!" cried Waldo, fervently grasping Heinrich's hand. But the momentary exultation was gone, as he turned to Claude, and remembered his late anxious fears. "But he is ill, Heinrich; he is very ill."

"Never mind, Mr. Waldo, he'll soon come all right again: it was only on account of that woman—that Lady Adelaide. Such a life—such a life she has led him; but, now he's got rid of her, you'll see a difference."

"But look, Heinrich,—look what has been in this goblet!—Look at the sediment!"

"In this goblet!" said Heinrich, with an unsteady voice; "Oh, Mr. Waldo, it is poison, sir!—it is poison! This is Miss Sherwood's doing. If she hadn't married that old Colonel, master would never have gone wrong at all."

"But we lose time!" said Waldo, who

was pale as a corpse. "Run, Henrich; run for a doctor."

"Who, sir?" asked the man, through his chattering teeth.

"The nearest. Ask the people of the house, but say nothing of our suspicions. Run—don't lose a minute. My poor, poor Claude," he cried, hanging over that beautiful face—beautiful even in ruin. "And is this the end! Merciful Heaven, spare him!—spare him to return to himself and Thee."

Lady Adelaide was indeed married. Offended at Lord Claude's proposition of living in complete retirement, she had eagerly accepted the offer of a young man of weak mind, who, dazzled by her beauty and flattered by her supposed preference, had thought that he could gloss over her tarnished reputation.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE lion of the day in London was Waldo, the American sculptor; *fêted*, caressed, idolized, he owed his popularity (however great his merits) almost as much to the faultless beauty of his person as to his genius. But Waldo's was not a nature to spoil; and, keenly as a man of taste will always enjoy the pleasures of refined and intellectual society, the sculptor often withdrew from the charms of the circles he most delighted in, to soothe the solitary hours of one diseased alike mentally and physically.

The second elopement, and subsequent marriage, of Lady Adelaide with Lord Durrant had been a nine days' wonder. Some had sympathized with Lord Claude Douglas's supposed disappointment and chagrin; others, with more reason, had congratulated him on what might be re-

garded as a happy escape. Claude was silent on the subject, and quite heedless of sympathy springing from condolence or congratulation. A severe illness had followed the night of misery preceding his expected wedding;—whether really produced by some attempt to shorten an existence, which his own sins and follies had rendered insupportable, never transpired. He was moody and melancholy. Waldo watched over him for weeks with a tenderness exceeding the love of woman. Not even his devotion to art—hitherto the master-passion of his life—could draw him from the couch of Claude; and it was only when he had recovered his usual degree of health, that Waldo again appeared in society.

He re-entered his apartment one day at the hotel, accompanied by the invalid, and found a note lying on his table. “I know that writing!” said Claude, in a voice of the deepest agitation; “it is—it is—”

“A card of invitation from Lady Ellaby, for the fifteenth,” said Waldo. “Most extraordinary, as I don’t know her at all!”

"Not at all extraordinary," said Claude, recovering himself in some degree, "not at all extraordinary; a known artist is public property, and requires no introduction. Besides, you, like another Crichton, have the reputation of uniting the gallant cavalier with the genius. She is probably curious to see you; perhaps is fulfilling a half-uttered prophecy which I heard from her the last time we met, and is becoming a woman of fashion in every respect. By all means go, Waldo."

"No, I shall not," said the sculptor; "and I wonder that Lady Ellaby should think of inviting a friend of yours."

"Ah, she does not know you—does not think of you in that character. Go, Waldo; I beseech you, go!" said Claude, as if suddenly struck with a new thought, "you can tell her—"

"I can tell Lady Ellaby nothing from you, dear Claude," said Waldo; "why should you disturb her peace now? Let her be happy, and fulfil her sacred duties."

"But even your severe principles," said

Claude, dejectedly; "even your severe principles cannot make you refuse to explain to her—"

"To what good could an explanation lead, Claude? Besides, you have really none to offer. In any case, I had better refuse."

"But have you no interest in seeing a woman so celebrated as Annie—as Lady Ellaby?"

"Ah, Claude, you are trying me with a bribe. Certainly I should like to see her, when I remember how often her beautiful thoughts have stirred the inmost pulse of my heart."

"Then do go, Waldo!—pray do go! There is no law, human or divine, which can render it criminal for you to tell her of my deep repentance. Let her at least know that! Tell her that if tears of blood could wash out sin, the recording angel would long ago have blotted out mine!"

"I will go—I will tell her that!" said Waldo.

"And you will ask her forgiveness for

me?—earnestly, beseechingly, as if you were the criminal?”

“I will, if you will promise me then to make no further reference to her—to forget this dead love, and look forward to a more healthy existence.”

“Dead love!” repeated Claude. “Dead, did you say? Ah, no!—love like ours could never die, any more than the souls it pervades. No; even in my deepest misery I have had, I have now, that one ray of comfort left,—our love is imperishable. We live in each other’s hearts—she in mine—I in hers—for ever! Yes; even disguised beneath a mass of ruins, of anger and disdain, could you search the secret chambers of her soul, you would find me there! I——”

“I am afraid you will again remind me of a likeness to my Puritan ancestors, Claude; but I must tell you, as a faithful friend,—I must repeat to you again and again,—remember Lady Ellaby’s ties, and respect them.”

“She is not his wife!” cried Claude, vehemently. “To wring my heart with late

remorse, to touch that callous woman—she may seem so—but she is not. She is mine, mine for ever! But I ask nothing, nothing but forgiveness. I well know I have forfeited all claim to her remembrance. The basest criminal is pardoned before he dies!”

“But there is no appearance of your dying, Claude! Believe me, if you would rouse yourself from this consuming melancholy, this useless dejection, you might yet fulfil high and noble duties in life.”

“No, no, Waldo! I have lost all self-respect. If I live, I shall try and reason myself into callous indifference, or else I shall try the old thorny road of penance. I feel quite capable of giving all my fortune to some hospital, and either burying myself in the Eastern desert, like Hester Stanhope, or ——”

“Or becoming a pillar-saint, like St. Simeon Stylites!” said Waldo.

“No; for then I should be in the eye of the holy Heaven. I would rather hide, were it possible, from God and man.”

"But your desert scheme would not answer without a fortune; for you know, when the said Hester Stanhope's money failed, she was deserted by the formerly obsequious Arabs, and left to die alone!"

"In any case, I must look forward to dying without one friendly hand to close my eyes!" said Claude.

"You will have me, if I do not die before you, Claude!" said Waldo.

"And I, *mein meister*. Do I count for nothing?" asked the privileged Heinrich, who at that moment entered.

"No, dear Heinrich; you count for a great deal; you are the best friend I have in the world, except Mr. Waldo," said Claude, kindly.

"And your brother?" asked Waldo.

"Ah, my brother!" said Claude, sighing. "I believe he merely regards me as his possible heir. We were quite separated in youth and childhood, and in after-life have rarely met. He is kind and friendly when we do meet, but there is no confidence between us; besides, he regards me (justly) now, as a

blot on the family escutcheon. He is right, quite right."

* * * * *

Lady Ellaby was receiving her distinguished guests with the high-bred air of a duchess, in the same splendid drawing-rooms in which Annie Sherwood had one day stood before Lady Adelaide Curzon, in the character of a candidate for the honour and favour of wearing her ladyship's distinguished yoke of servitude. And did Lady Ellaby remember that scene?—remember the years of cruel bondage through which she had struggled to her present envied position! Yes, she remembered them well! and even sometimes referred to them with such careless indifference, that they seemed to have left no sting behind in Memory's waste.

Lady Ellaby was, as usual, undecorated by jewels or costly array. She was clad in black velvet, relieved by ermine. Her countenance was calm and quiet, and spoke nothing of suffering; but it was less proud than was its wont, and her carriage, though

dignified, had less of imperious decision. She looked ~~what she was~~—a woman of genius, far above those among whom she walked, yet careless of her elevation and distinction. Some change had come o'er the "spirit of her dream," perchance; but no one noticed it, and she moved about with quiet grace beneath the flashing lamps of her gorgeous mansion—the aversion of some, the admiration of many, the envy of yet more.

The crowd—there is a crowd, though a select one—is slightly moved near the entrance of the department, as the hero of the night, the new star in the constellation of genius, appears. Every eye turns on Henry Waldo as he enters, for he is "eminently beautiful." Lady Ellaby starts from a slight reverie, and hastens to receive him, having forcibly subdued the momentary agitation produced by the first sound of a name, once so intimately coupled with that of her fallen idol. Never had Lady Ellaby been more brilliant and fascinating: she exerted her utmost powers to please, and completely charmed the young American. Ah! Waldo

did not marvel then, that Claude had loved that woman. He only wondered that he could have sacrificed her to pride and the world!

Later in the evening, when many an object of enchantment had been discussed, and many a bright idea had fallen from the eloquent lips of Lady Ellaby, Waldo contrived, though with the utmost caution and delicacy, to advert to his unhappy friend, and at length succeeded in bringing forth a few incoherent words of his mission of pacification. Lady Ellaby listened quietly to the end, and with no visible emotion, unless it were in the almost imperceptible quivering of her lip,—then, looking full into Waldo's face, she said, "Tell Lord Claude Douglas, Mr. Waldo, that Annie Sherwood no longer exists, and that Lady Ellaby is happy enough to appreciate the duty and fidelity she owes to an indulgent husband." And, rising as she spoke, Lady Ellaby moved to the other side of the room, and was soon after seen leaning on the arm of Lord Ellaby, all affectionate smiles and vivacity; and as Waldo

gazed on that proud, grand-looking man, a doubt entered his mind, as to whether his tenderness and devotion might not at length have consoled her for the loss of an ungrateful lover.

While he was thus musing, there was another arrival, and the crowd again parted. There entered a boy, who seemed to have numbered about fifteen years—perhaps might have been more or less. In mind, he had already reached the full growth of man; his slight, elegant figure was perfectly erect; and his beautiful head, covered with thick clustering curls, was thrown back with an air of haughty defiance, while his eye, so deeply blue, that in the light of the flashing lamps it looked quite black, passed boldly from one object to another, all round the room, as if he were expecting insult, and stood prepared to repel it.

Lady Ellaby visibly changed colour at the appearance of Lord Lorrimer. For a moment she forgot her present self: it was a beloved object that stood before her—her old, pleasant companion. Claude's friend, too,—the beau-

tiful link of gold that had first bound Claude and her together. She loved Sydney, with all his selfishness—all his wayward humours; and she eagerly advanced to meet him; but then stood still. Remembrance had come back; she recollected his proud spirit, and thought he might, perhaps, be capable of insulting a detested step-mother. She could bear any insult from another, but not from Sydney.

But Annie miscalculated. The proud boy advanced to her, and, addressing her as "Mother," kissed her hand. Annie was for once quite overcome: she retained his hand in hers a moment, and her eyes filled with most unwonted tears. Lord Ellaby was greatly pleased to observe so warm a greeting pass between his wife and son. He had expected an immediate declaration of war between his proud heir and the step-mother. How agreeable was the disappointment. "Ah, Sydney, my dear boy!" he exclaimed, "how glad I am! how——"

"How well you look, my Lord!" said Sydney. "I must thank my dear mother

for her care of you!" and he spoke, and looked round, as if he would have said—"Who shall mock my words?"—but no one did.

A little time after, Sydney found an opportunity of a private conversation with Lady Ellaby. "Why is that man here?" he asked, shortly, and designating Waldo.

"He is the celebrated sculptor, Waldo," said Annie, in a deprecatory tone: "everybody invites him."

"I know, I know!" said Lord Lorrimer, impatiently; "but he is *his* friend, and cannot be ours. I know they were together in Rome, and together travelled into Greece. You are altered," he added, suddenly changing his conversation. "You are greatly altered since the first day I saw you. You become your trappings well; ay, better than *she* did. It was very sensible in my father to marry you; you have infused some of your spirit into him. Now, he is never ridiculous!"

"Pray don't couple the word ridiculous with your father, Sydney."

"Nay, it ill becomes any of us to moralize," said Sydney, abruptly. "We are all hypocrites; you the cleverest, of course. But it is no use putting on a mask before me,—you know it is not. Don't you think I understand your position perfectly well? The daring, dangerous game you have so successfully played. Indeed, I have watched all the moves, and have admired your skill, I assure you!"

"You are as singular as ever, boy!" said Annie.

"More so, probably," said Lorrimer, smiling. "However, we shall be good friends now, Lady Ellaby, whatever we may have been before. I don't doubt but that you thought I should bully my father for marrying you. So I should have done, perhaps, some time ago;—but we had fallen so low, so very low. You have built us up again; and, as I said before, Lord Ellaby is no longer a zero in the world. I don't pretend to be sentimental; but I am gratified; and, as I said before, we shall be friends. We have a common object in life."

"And what is that?" asked Lady Ellaby.

"Revenge!" said Lorrimer, growing suddenly pale. "You must have thought me dull, indeed, if you supposed that I did not see through all! You loved him with one of those romantic passions that can only change to hate—and I, yes, I loved him too—admired him—made him my hero! He has stung us both. But never mind, we shall have revenge;—we have it already!"

"Let us talk of something pleasant," said Lady Ellaby; "of your pursuits, Sydney."

"They are not exactly what they were," said Sydney. "I have read a good deal,—read in your way, Lady Ellaby,—picking up a good deal of odd, out-of-the-way things, instead of constantly pouring over classics; though I shall expect to take a respectable degree at Cambridge some day."

"What was your last book?"

"*Macchiavelli*."

"Surely it did not interest you?"

"Indeed, it did. By-the-bye, Lady Ellaby, if it would not excite unpleasant reminiscences, I wish you would rub up my Italian.

I cannot study with any one else as I can with you."

"Of course, I will do anything to help you."

"Do you know anything of Spanish?" he asked.

"Very little," replied Annie.

"Enough to put me in the way of reading Calderon's plays? I hope," continued Sydney, abruptly changing the theme, "I hope I shall find a good shooting-gallery here."

"I dare say you will, Sydney."

"I am very anxious to be a good shot."

"I should not have thought you would have cared about it!"

"I do, though. I have practised rifle-shooting for a long time."

"Dear me, what for?"

"Can you ask, Lady Ellaby? To give me a steady hand and aim. To rid the world—to rid me of him!"

"Oh, Sydney, leave him to Heaven!"

"Did *you* leave Lady Adelaide to Heaven?" asked Lorrimer, sharply. "Certainly not;

you wrung her very heart and soul, and you did well, yes, very well indeed. You took on you a yoke you loathed; wore a title your pride, under other circumstances, would have made you spurn; married a man you despised too much to hate, and go through a masquerade scene every day, every hour of your life—and this, all this for revenge! I am your apt pupil, Lady Ellaby! I admire you—I own no other mother! I will walk in your steps, and be worthy of my preceptress! Yet, but a few short years, and I will drag the coward from his lair, wherever it may be, and wash out the blot from our escutcheon in something redder than Burgundy. Dear me! is this *you*, Lady Ellaby? Can *you* be so weak! You are faint. Exert yourself; you must, you shall, before these people! Here, come with me!” And as Lorrimer led Lady Ellaby from the drawing-room, he muttered, “We will never be ridiculous again! You see,” continued he, seating himself beside her, in her dressing-room, “I have talent, energy, the means of pursuing a great career in life; but all

will be useless to me while he cumber the earth. When once I have stamped upon his grave, I shall go forth like a young war-horse, in the arena of life. How you are shuddering! Overcome this weakness, Lady Ellaby, or I shall fancy my father a second time dishonoured. By Heaven! if I were sure he were, my vengeance should not wait for slowly coming manhood!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

LADY ELLABY and her sister seldom met; when they did—though the old affection lived in the heart of each—there was much of restraint in their intercourse; confidence was gone. Richard and Ellen refused to meet Lord Ellaby; they considered Annie's marriage wrong, even criminal, and no explanation could suffice to make them more tolerant. Of course, Mr. and Mrs. Stancliff were too obscure for Lord Ellaby to desire their acquaintance, or to resent their unwillingness to make his. Annie and Ellen had apparently, in one respect, changed positions; for Annie, despite the thousand points on which they differed, looked up to Ellen now, as something immeasurably above herself, just as in former and happier days, Ellen had looked up to her; while Ellen's affection for her sister was fast merging

into the tenderest compassion. Still, the old throb of proud exultation would arise in her bosom, when the echo of her sister's literary fame came into her solitude ; but on those occasions, Richard would look very grave, and say, "But it is all vanity, Ellen—all vanity! What is genius without principle? Annie is always a painful subject of contemplation to me."

"You don't know, you can't tell, what she has suffered, Richard!" was the reply. "Fire does not always purify, it sometimes hardens. There are so many traces of her own noble nature left; she is still so generous, so unselfish, and does so much good, though it is all in secret. I have never despaired of Annie, and I never will!" Not long after, Ellen was summoned to her sister, who was alarmingly ill. The artificial restraint so long imposed on her feelings had proved too much for her physical strength, and she had been obliged to yield to weakness.

It was Lord Ellaby himself who wrote to summon Ellen; forgetting his pride, he con-

descended to entreaty, and besought her to come and watch over a life so inestimably valuable to himself and his family.

It wanted no persuasion to decide Ellen on immediately flying to her beloved sister at such a moment; she reproached herself for the temporary estrangement, which had certainly not been her fault.

When Ellen arrived, she was instantly led to Lady Ellaby, who lay powerless as an infant; she had only a day or two previously broken a blood-vessel. What a contrast the pale, thin face, half-shrouded in its masses of ebon hair, offered to the splendid room in which she was lying. The foot fell noiselessly on a rich carpet of purple and yellow, the transparent draperies looked as if they had been woven in fairy looms, and large silvery mirrors reflected highly gilded furniture, marbles, vases, statuettes of parian, besides the thousand and one ornaments which taste scatters with so seemingly negligent a hand. There were books in profusion, and on an open secretary lay a folio of the work Annie was preparing for the press,

when illness had surprised her in her labours. Beside the half-written sheet lay the pen which had fallen from a powerless hand, and close by it a packet of time-stained, perhaps tear-stained letters, and a bouquet of dried flowers, so dried that the once green leaves were crumbling to dust. They were lying on a sheet of paper, on which was written—

“Le bois de la Cambre,
Bruxelles, le 18 Juin, 185—,
Le plus beau jour de ma vie!”

Only one eye had been wont to rest on those treasured mementoes, now the careless and the curious spied them out, but the one who prized them knew it not.

Ellen stood beside her sister's bed unannounced. The languid eyes were raised and flooded with sudden joy, as with a light. How plainly those eyes spoke and said, “I knew that you would come! I knew that nothing would keep you from me now!” Annie eagerly seized both Ellen's hands, and pressed them to her lips, while a gush of tears relieved her feelings. It was long before either could speak. “I believe I am

in great danger," said Annie, in so low a voice, that it was almost a whisper. "I almost hope it is true! Do you think it is, Ellen?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Ellen, half wild with fear. "To lose you thus would be horrible! Surely, you will be spared to my prayers!"

"To your prayers I may be!" said Annie, sadly; "but what have I to live for, Ellen? Did Richard¹ willingly let you come?"

"Oh, yes, dearest Annie, and he would have come too, only he did not feel quite sure whether you would like to see him."

"No, I should not like to see him; he is too severe in his judgments to deal with such a wandering sheep as I am. But you, my precious Ellen, your love will plead for me; you will pray for me; alas, I cannot pray for myself!" So Ellen knelt down by that bed of suffering, as she had often knelt beside the miserable pallet of sin and misery, and opened her lips to pray. "Stay!" said Annie, "stay! take this from me; it weighs me down like a chain; perhaps I can pray

when it is gone." And she held out her feeble arm to Ellen, who detached from it a narrow velvet bracelet, binding on a locket holding one jetty curl. "I loved him—I loved him more than God! and God has punished the idolater!" said Annie, as her eyes followed the relic, which Ellen carried to deposit in the cabinet. Then Ellen returned, and offered up a holy prayer, to which Annie seemed to listen, though she did not appear to join. "And now," said she, hurriedly, when her sister had concluded,—“now, I must tell you all, or perhaps it will be too late!”

“But you are expending all your strength, dear Annie. Spare yourself, for my sake, at least. No one loves you as I do!”

“No, no one,” said Annie. “Ah! if I had been contented with that love! Put your arm beneath my head, Ellen; the other round me, as you used to do, when we (no, not you, for you were always thankful), when I thought we were very poor and wretched; when we had but one room, one bed, one crust. Oh, Ellen! those were

happy, blessed days! But they may not return again! My heart is broken! You will let me tell you all, Ellen—you will let me tell you all now, that you may think more gently of me when I am gone! I have erred, grievously erred; but listen! The world judges me without mercy, and my heart is grown harder than a stone. I have scorned the world's judgments—hurled back defiance for contumely; but I am too weak for that now! Listen, Ellen! I will not tell you what I suffered for years, in the house of heartless strangers, more heartless, perhaps, in appearance sometimes than reality; for the fear of the world governs all—the dread of being beneath the fashion. The Maberlys were of the kind I mean. They were not bad-hearted; but they were afraid—yes, positively afraid of showing kindness to their governess, lest they should be thought vulgar! So they left me to that utter solitude, which preyed upon heart and mind, till I became bad-tempered and morose, and my pride rebelled against the haughtiness of those I felt to be my inferiors, but

to whom, because I was their salaried dependant, I must for days and months bend obsequiously. Their children I loved: they had all hearts, and might have been trained to angels, but they were pampered, and taught a lesson of worldliness. But I must not dwell on them. They bring back the memory of dear Antonia—sweet, but faithless Antonia—as I often call her. Still, it is weakness; but I cannot help loving her: and love and anger cannot dwell together.”

“Dear Annie, this is too much for you!” interrupted Ellen.

“No; it relieves, it strengthens me. Let my full heart speak, or it will burst. But what is that?” she cried, suddenly, startled by the report of a gun, and growing, if possible, paler than before. “Ring, Ellen, quickly, I entreat!” Ellen rung as desired. “What is that report?” she asked, faintly, when the attendant entered.

“Lord Lorrimer, your Ladyship, firing at a mark—practising, as he calls it. I have supplicated him to stop, but he wont, my Lady.”

"I am so ill!" murmured Annie, over whose frame a fearful shudder had passed.

"Shall we let my Lord know, your Ladyship? Lord Lorrimer will mind no one else, but says just as he used in old times, "Do you know who I am?"

"Ah!" sighed Annie, to whom those words brought back a world of memories. "No," she replied; "but tell Lord Lorrimer my head will not bear the noise. Now, Ellen, listen once more. I have told you of the Maberlys; you knew something of them before. My chains with them were silken fetters, compared with my bondage to that woman. Ah, there is my misery! There is the load that presses my soul down to the burning pit, and shuts Heaven's mercy against me! I cannot forgive her! I have tried, but I can't! Perhaps it would grow easier, if I were sure—quite, quite sure that she was no longer near him. They say they are no longer together; but I can't believe it—no, I can't believe it. Ah, Ellen, you shudder! So should I have shuddered once. But listen! If it were only my iron

bondage, the years of misery, the daily, hourly tortures she made me suffer, I could freely forgive it all—yes, all! But when I remember that she took him from me, my brain is maddened; for I loved him, oh, so madly, with that love that hurls down destruction on the idolater! Ellen, you know none of these things, absolutely nothing. Your pure, innocent love, God has blessed and approved. You can't enter into the miseries of consuming passion; still less can you understand the fierce pangs of jealousy. When she lured him from me, from honour, from every high thought and feeling, I became like a lioness robbed of her whelps. My highest hopes, my pride, were centred in him, as well as my idolatrous love. All—all, she swept away, and Heaven looked on! Had she stood before me in the first storm of my passion, I should have——, I don't know what I should have done. As it was, I had time—yes, time to reflect—and I gathered all the strength from the depth of my stubborn nature; made my angry passions crouch down like chained



lions at my feet; and walked through the world coldly, immovably as a statue: and all the while I lived only for revenge. Your lips quiver, Ellen; you would tell me to repent, and cry for mercy! But is there yet time? I would undo it all now—all, if I could. But it is done—done to all eternity!"

"Forgive the unhappy man, and banish him from your thoughts!" said Ellen.

"Forgive him!" said Annie, starting. "You will scarcely believe it, but through all this tempest of passion I have never had one angry feeling towards him—never! And now," she continued, melting into tears, "now, if laying down my life for him would give him one minute's happiness, I would do it joyfully. But it is she that troubles me. Oh, Ellen, ask God to teach me to forgive her, as I have forgiven all others." Some one knocked at the door, but did not enter, when told to come in. Ellen went to the door to see who was there. Lord Ellaby stood before her. He pressed her hand, and anxiously inquired for the sufferer.

"Thank Lord Ellaby, dear Ellen," said Annie, "and say I am better already, since he has had the kindness to send for you." Lord Ellaby received the message and retired. "I shall send for Lord Ellaby to ask his forgiveness, if I am to die," said Annie, when his Lordship was gone. "He is a very kind-hearted man; his pride was his only fault. That is softened now, and he is extremely generous, letting me live and act exactly as I please, since the first few weeks we were together, when he used to persecute me with lover-like attentions. I am not really his wife. I have never considered myself as such!"

"Then the sooner you part the better," said Ellen, quickly; "God will spare you to us. You will go home with me, Annie dearest,—you will go home with me. Richard will be so glad, and we shall all be happy again."

"No, dear Ellen," said Annie; "if I am spared, I will not leave Lord Ellaby. I have wronged him grievously; but for me

he might have formed ties which would have made life pleasant; and though I cannot be all to him another would, I will remain in his house, watch over his family and interests, and do all I can to atone for the past. But I may not live, perhaps, to do this; I scarcely think I can."

"But you have not told me who your doctor is, dear Annie."

"Oh, a very great man,—Dr. F——."

"Why not Dr. Sinclair?"

"I did not like to send for him," said Annie; "we have only met once since I entered this house. I sent for him one day when feeling very ill; he took on himself to tell me I had behaved in a very unprincipled way. 'That is a grave charge, Doctor!' said I, trying to laugh it off. 'One richly merited,' he replied; and, after hastily prescribing for me, he left, nor did he return again. How can I send for him, Ellen?"

"I know he is rough in his ways, but he is a most faithful friend nevertheless," said Ellen. "Dear Annie, let him come."

"Well then, as you will," said Annie;
"only don't leave me alone with him."

* * * * *

The Doctor was summoned, and this time came more in sorrow than in anger. It was long since he had seen Lady Ellaby; he was painfully struck by the alteration in her appearance, and sat silent some time after his few questions had been answered. He did not scold this time, his patient looked so wan, and meek, and humbled.

"I see what you think!" said Annie, attempting to smile.

"No, you don't," said the Doctor, quickly, "not a bit of it; I was thinking of your sister's wedding-day; I was thinking, too, of the foolish speech I made you that day, half in jest, half in earnest; and wondering if it would not have been more for your happiness and safety to have taken it in earnest, sobered down your wild fancy, and contented yourself with the lot a silly, white-haired old man would have given you. It would have been better, Lady Ellaby, far better. My dingy walls wouldn't

have pressed such a dead weight on you as these gilded things."

"Yes, yes, it would have been better," murmured Annie; "but who can recall the past?"

"You will get over this," said the Doctor. Annie did not speak, but her sister's face lighted up.

"And then you will order her country air," said Ellen, eagerly.

"Southern air," said the Doctor. "She must winter in the South of France."

"No, no; not there," said Annie, quickly; "anywhere but there!"

"Well, then, Pisa," said the Doctor; "but you will be careful of yourself, or have some one to guard you who will?"

"I shall have Sydney," said Annie.

"The young puppy will do you more harm than good!" said the Doctor.

"I think not," said Annie; "he is very kind and attentive to me; and, besides, I like to have some one near me that I love; and you know I cannot have Ellen."

"So, you love him, indeed!—love! Do

you remember who I am? I thought you had had enough of him," said the Doctor.

"Yes, I love him dearly," said Annie; "I can't bear him out of my sight. I have so many fearful presentiments of some coming evil."

"Well, I suppose my Lord will take it into his head to go with you."

"He cannot, he has duties at home. That is, of course, a great obstacle. He will miss me."

"I don't the least doubt it. But I'll tell you now, Lady Ellaby, what my prescription is. Go to Pisa directly you're in a state to move. Don't fag yourself with society; keep quiet, and give yourself up to book-making, and forget all you leave behind you outside the walls of Wareham Rectory."

"I will try," said Annie, humbly.

"Then you will succeed. You know you always carry your points, great and small."

"Not always, Doctor," said Annie, smiling faintly.

"I shall go with you, Annie," said Ellen.

"Go with me, my dear, kind Ellen, will you?" said Annie, with an irradiation of countenance that had long been absent from her face.

"Of course she will," said the Doctor. "What did you do for her, when she was laid up? Toiled at complete drudgery!"

"Oh, no," said Annie; "it was happiness. Those were blessed days."

"Blessed nonsense!—to be scratched, and pinched, and kicked by a pack of squalling children. I'll tell you what, Annie Sherwood—(don't start and blush; my Lord wont be jealous of a white-haired old fellow like me)—with all your sense, you never had common sense in your life!"

"I believe not," said Annie; "but Ellen dear —— Richard. What will Richard say to your plan?"

"He will say I am quite right. You will only be two or three months absent; he will think the sacrifice richly recompensed, if it benefits you."

"No, Ellen, dearest, you shall not leave your husband and children for me. The

love that you send forth with me will be almost as sweet a solace as your company. Oh, Ellen, that you could always be with me! Your pure spirit soothes and refines my sinful soul. If you had never left me—if we had never been separated—perchance I should have had less sorrow, certainly less self-reproach.”

“But, Annie,” said Ellen, gently, “you must remember there is a higher, holier influence than any frail mortal could exercise, if we would only be guided by it. It is not wise, it is not safe, to lean so much on an erring creature.”

“But instinct always seems to lead you right,” said Annie, mournfully. “You always clearly and instantly saw your way, while I ever had to grope like the blind.”

“We are all blind till God gives us light,” said Ellen. “Indeed, if I had been situated like you—placed in the same position and circumstances—my weakness would have yielded, and I should have had more to accuse myself of than you have!”

"Ah, no!—no one, perhaps, would have acted as I have done. I believe, I hope there is but one Anne Sherwood in the world; and, alas! I have been proud of the miserable distinction!"

"Well, all this moralizing is, perhaps, very edifying," said the Doctor, helping himself to a large pinch of snuff; "very edifying, indeed, and the speeches you have been pleased to utter have been very pathetic and touching; but I must trouble you to stop, and, if we are to have any acting at all, it must be comedy of the lightest description. I shall see you again to-morrow, Lady Ellaby. If the great man, Dr. F——, makes a breeze about my interfering, you can tell him I'm an old friend, understand your constitution, and all that sort of thing. Good-bye!" Then (to himself), "Ah, sickness has brought her down a little!—not quite so high and mighty as the last time I saw her! Not a bit herself;—none of the old, quick, clever answers. Well, I haven't scolded her as she deserves; but I'll wait a bit; yes, I'll wait a bit."

"You'll never scold me again, Doctor," said Annie, with a little flash of her old spirit.

"So you're mean enough to listen, are you?" said the old man, coming back to the bedside, with a little gleam of the old, merry light twinkling in his eyes. "By-the-bye, who do you think is on my list of patients now?"

"I am sure I can't tell, Doctor."

"Why, Madam Juno herself!"

"Lady—Lady Adelaide!" said Annie, faintly, and sinking back on her pillows.

"No other," said the Doctor. "Disease of the heart,—quite surprised,—didn't know she had one at all,—never trust to appearances again! Her pride is fallen a little; but she has turned out a regular termagant, with a wrinkled forehead and cracked voice. Her boy-husband is frightened out of his life of her."

"She is, then, married—really, really married," said Annie, in a low but eager voice.

“ Too surely, for the simpleton that’s tied to her.”

“ And what—what has become of the unhappy man who——? You know I once knew something of him,” said Annie, while her white lips quivered with ill-suppressed emotion.

“ I suppose so,” said the Doctor, with a little less good humour. “ He is off, across the Atlantic,—a good riddance of bad rubbish. There’s no knowing whose wife he might take a fancy to run off with next. But I can stop no longer for this small talk. Now, if you’d talk sensibly, with spirit, as you used to talk five or six years ago——” and muttering, as he left the room, the remainder of the sentence, the Doctor was gone.

Annie said nothing, but held Ellen’s hand in hers—sometimes kissing it, sometimes laying it under her hot face. A few quiet tears now and then stole down her cheeks; but a calm seemed to have settled on her perturbed spirit; and presently she fell into a quiet sleep; only now and then her lips

parted, and breathed a few inaudible words; at least inaudible to every ear but that of watchful affection. "An ocean—a wide ocean—between us! But it rolls between him and her too! that is a mercy, at least!"

* * * * *

Ellen remained watching over her sister, till Lady Ellaby had sufficiently recovered to travel. Then she would have accompanied her, having already obtained kind Richard's full consent, and even his approval; but Annie would not listen to a proposition which would separate her sister from her husband and children for several months. She wished for no companion but Lord Lorrimer. An absence for a winter would make a great break in his studies. Lord Ellaby passed over that objection directly it was suggested to him. Sydney himself, though ambitious of early distinction, eagerly caught at the idea of accompanying his stepmother, and said he should not fail of finding plenty to do; he should read Italian and practise shooting.

After hearing this, Lady Ellaby became

still more anxious to secure his company.

"I wish I could go," said Lord Ellaby.

"You are really very, very good, my Lord," said Annie. "I have little deserved all your kindness."

Lord Ellaby looked at her in surprise; it was so new to hear her speak so humbly—so very new.

"You look surprised, my Lord," said Annie, "and no doubt are so. In case we do not meet again—in case anything should happen to me—I must speak frankly, and tell you what is on my mind. First, I am very grateful to you for all your goodness and forbearance——"

"Say no more, pray, my dear Octavia," said his Lordship. "Indeed, you pain me; you make me think of past days of injustice, pride, and oppression."

"Ah, I have forgotten and forgiven all that, my Lord! It did not arise from you. I have had too many proofs of your good heart and kindly nature to believe so; no, all that sprang from *the laws which govern the social institutions of aristocratic England!*

Of late—I wish it had not been too late—I have repented, bitterly repented, of the injury—I may say injuries, that I have done you.”

“Injuries!” said Lord Ellaby. “I know of none—positively none, Octavia, but your withholding from me the affection I covet; the—— But you are beginning to love me now, Octavia—I feel, I see that you are!”

“Oh! no, no, my Lord!” cried Annie, starting back to avoid her husband’s caresses; “I do not love you. I wish I did, but I do not; and I cannot again deceive or wrong you. My heart is crushed and broken, as much by its own pride as by others’ cruelty; but it will keep one pure chamber still; it will not dishonour its only fragment of self-esteem.”

CHAPTER XIX.

"AND this is Italy! Corinne's Italy!" was Annie's exclamation, when first the soft Italian breezes fanned her languid cheek.

"Lord Claude Douglas and Lady Adelaide's Italy," said Sydney, gloomily contracting his brows.

Annie shuddered as he spoke, and closed her eyes.

"You have not forgotten him, then?" added the boy, hastily; "I see you have not. I never thought to see you so weak; but I hope you will put a good face on it. Hitherto you have behaved admirably."

"Oh no, Sydney,—say wickedly."

"No, I wont, Lady Ellaby; I can't, nor could you, till lately. That sister of yours has been preaching to you. I'll tell you what, she is far too pretty for a Methodist."

Annie was too feeble to argue with the

youthful man of the world; she leaned back in the carriage, and shut her eyes to the beautiful land. Each glance seemed to smite on her heart,—each song from the tuneful voices of the lively peasants brought with it the requiem of a promised happiness, that had perished before it began to exist for her. Despite all her resolution, a soft, persuasive, musical voice sounded in her ears, and it said, as she had once heard it say among the murmurings of greenwood leaves, “Annie dearest, have you never dreamt of seeing Italy, with me—with your own Claude?”

Sydney sat opposite, watching the fluctuations of her face, and wondering why the proud woman had grown so meek and humble; and thinking with doubly-fierce hatred of the man he had once loved.

Meanwhile Claude Douglas was wandering in the Far West—in the grand forests, on the banks of the mighty rivers, vainly seeking the peace of mind that fled from him the more closely he pursued the chase.

* * * * *

Six melancholy months Lady Ellaby spent in Italy, reading the divine poetry of the land, as much in its stainless skies as in its imperishable bards and the glorious creations of its artists. She wandered from one place of interest to another, looking on and searching out all that other travellers regard with pleasure; but the impressions on her mind—the images reflected in her soul—were very different from those of others, as her published thoughts proved, when she returned to the English world; but few were those thoughts of the many that had risen within her. There had come so many, that no eye less merciful than His who remembers we are ashes, might know.

Lady Ellaby reached Rome the Eternal, and Corinne was her guide-book, as it had been that of Claude Douglas. It was in vain she strove to banish him from her thoughts in Rome. A deeper sadness settled on her spirits, and she hurried away to Naples, there to spend the remainder of the cold season.

It was Dr. Sinclair who had escorted

Annie to Italy, Lord Ellaby having eagerly accepted his offer to take charge of the invalid; it was the kind old man who came to lead her back again to her own land; it was he who exerted his every faculty to rouse her from dejection, and to awaken her from the sad visions in which he well knew that she was plunged too often. On her return from Italy, Annie paid a brief visit to Ellen, and then once more took up her abode in the mansion of him whose name she bore. She still went into society occasionally; still received guests at home; but though she would sometimes sparkle with her old vivacity, her general demeanour was quiet and subdued. Her chief intimacy was with Mrs. Harrington; and it was well known that much of her time was spent in going about doing good, while her literary productions more and more evinced that her mind was assuming a healthier tone.

* * * * *

Time passed on, as it will pass, in sorrow or in gladness. Lord Lorrimer had attained his sixteenth year, and with it a rare

perfection of proud beauty. His slender, graceful form far passed the usual standard, and he stood amid youths of his own years, as superior to them in mind and attainments, as he rose above them in form. Lady Ellaby loved him devotedly, even as if he had not been Adelaide's child,—loved him so that her partial fondness no longer permitted her to discern his faults, except when now and then she received a sudden shock by a dark hint, or a more open declaration, that he still nurtured the fiercest hatred towards the man who had brought shame and dishonour upon his family, and still caressed the idea of washing it out in his blood.

“What are these for?” asked Annie, fearfully, when Lord Lorrimer, kneeling on one knee before her, opened a case of duelling-pistols, and invited her to examine and admire the beautiful workmanship. “What are they for?” she repeated, almost gasping for breath, as a cold, cruel smile passed over the fair boy's lips.

“To shoot him!” he replied, in a low,

deep voice, adding, "I am a good shot, you know; I have consumed many hours in practice."

In vain Annie wept, and prayed that stubborn spirit to forbear his vengeance. He roughly shook off her clinging hold, exclaiming, in answer to something she had said, "I'll tell you, Lady Ellaby, that if you betray me to my father, I will let him know your real feelings, your real motives, for opposing my just vengeance."

"I will spare you the pains, Lord Lorimer," exclaimed Annie, something of her old spirit flashing in her eyes; "I will tell him all—more than you could tell—and he will lay his commands on you to spare yourself the guilt of murder!"

"Then I shall simply tell him, that he should have had spirit enough to avenge his own honour; and I should not have been called upon to do it."

"Surely he has suffered enough, Sydney!" said Annie.

"And I, Lady Ellaby," said the boy, looking up with a livid face,—“do you think

I have suffered nothing? Do you think I was insensible when the finger of scorn was pointed at me as her son! at my father as his dupe!"—and for the first time—the very first time—the proud boy burst into a passion of tears.

"My Sydney! my own Sydney!" exclaimed Annie, for a moment forgetting everything but his grief, as she pressed him to her bosom. "You know something of my love for you, but not all; no, not half its extent. You do not know how necessary you are to me! Can you wonder that I would guard so dear a life? Think of your father—your kind, good father's overwhelming grief. If you threw away your young existence, he would die—I know he would! Think, too, of my sorrow! What would become of me now without you? And for what would you bring such misery on the two beings who love you best?—to throw fresh dishonour, fresh guilt on a name already——"

"Well, I will think over all you have said, and imagine the rest," said the boy,

trying to smile and speak lightly; "but now I must be off. I am deep in a Greek play. You know the trilogy in *Æschylus*, don't you? It is very grand; but I fancy if you were in your old mood, you would prefer the *Prometheus*. I do—I like the grandeur of the Titan hurling defiance at the Thunderer! I like the fatalism, too. '*A riverirla*,' he added, and, bending over Lady Ellaby, he kissed her. "I wonder you grant me this privilege—I believe I am the only one so favoured!"

"I regard none other as my child, Sydney!"

"Mother," said Sydney, "you know I have no sentiment; but, after all, 'mother' is a pleasant word. Thank you for all your love; and whatever happens, remember I do love you—love you with all my heart. But I must go to my Greek."

Annie looked after Sydney, and seeing him pick up two or three books as he left the room, and carry away with him, was rather reassured as to his present intentions, and turned to her occupations; but soon a vague

uneasiness returned. She sought for Lord Ellaby, to impart her fears to him, and with him to concert some means of averting the dreadful catastrophe she apprehended; but Lord Ellaby was out, and would not return till dinner-time.

Annie spent several hours of intense anxiety. Sydney had gone out; she well knew Claude Douglas was in London, and there was every chance of their meeting. She went to Sydney's room, and was somewhat comforted to find the pistols were there. Late in the evening, she heard him enter. She spoke to him as he ascended the staircase, but her voice did not reach him. His step was hurried and agitated. She followed him up-stairs; she heard him lock his door; a fear of something horrible seized on her; her knees smote together; she reached the door, tried to speak, but utterance failed; a loud report of a pistol, a heavy fall, and a tale of horror was told.

The servants crowded to the scene; the door was burst open, and there lay the fair casket from which the young fiery spirit

had just rushed forth, weltering in blood. Those who could more calmly survey the fearful scene, assured themselves and others that a dreadful accident had terminated the career of the proud heir of the Curzons. It was supposed that he had taken up one of his loaded pistols to examine it, that the trigger had become entangled in his watch-chain, and in seeking too hastily to disentangle it, the fearful result had followed; and the pale, cold lips that death had silenced could not open to tell how far the conjectures were true. Insensible from extreme horror, Lady Ellaby was carried from the room, while they went through the useless ceremony of sending for the doctor. He, of course, pronounced that death had been instantaneous, the ball having entered the heart.

The unhappy father arrived. In speechless horror and despair he looked on all that remained to him of his idolized son, the proud heir of his fortunes, his titles, and honours, — the son whose career was to have stamped the unfading nobility of genius on the family escutcheon. There he lay,

cold and dead—and cold and dead with him a mighty host of proud, fond hopes! How the once haughty man wept and groaned, and wrung his hands, and called upon the inexorable Heavens to give him back his son, his boy—his beautiful, proud boy! But silence was the only answer to that voice of agony; and the dim, cold midnight came, and spread its black pall over the dead boy and the wretched parent, as they lay side by side on the floor.

In the cold, stiff hand a letter was grasped, here and there stained by the gushing blood, and this they read in it:—

“I have wronged you enough, poor boy. I will not add to that wrong by bringing the guilt of your young blood on my head! You are already avenged enough, believe me. I bear about with me an incurable remorse and regret, that time aggravates instead of softening. No! I will not spill your blood—the blood of a child I once loved, and who loved me too!

“By the remembrance of old days, Syd-

ney, when no barrier of guilt or anger rose
between us, forgive and pity

“CLAUDE DOUGLAS.”

From that day forth Lord Ellaby sank into premature old age. He relinquished his public duties, society, everything the world could offer.

Lady Ellaby devoted herself entirely to the bereaved father; and whilst suffering almost as severely as himself, from the fearful shock she had received, exerted her utmost efforts to soothe and comfort him. But her efforts were only partially successful. Lord Ellaby would sit for hours looking on vacancy—buried in dreams—from which he only awoke to ask for his son, his beautiful boy! And when the truth rushed back on his desolate heart, such a paroxysm of passionate grief followed, that reason and life seemed equally endangered.

CHAPTER XX.

A DARK cloud settled on Lord Ellaby's latter days. It was not exactly madness—it was too quiet an oppression of the faculties. The fire of frenzy never gleamed in his dull eye; his voice never rose in the storm of tempestuous passion; it was low, mournful, except occasionally, when he fancied himself in years gone by, and reassumed the haughty tone which had then distinguished him. It was strange, very strange, to witness the utter oblivion of things that had lately occurred, even of the terrible blow which had struck down his proudest, fondest hopes, that was quite forgotten.

He would write long letters to Sydney, who he firmly believed to be at Harrow, and preparing for a future career of honour and distinction. It was a happy delusion; none could be so cruel as to undeceive him.

There was another name, too, incessantly on his lips,—that of Adelaide, the wife of his youth, the mother of his children. He would call upon her even with tears, sometimes expostulating with her in a tone of the tenderest reproach, on her absenting herself from him and from her family. Still he only thought that the pleasures of society drew her from home,—her guilt and dishonour were entirely effaced from his memory. He talked, too, of Claude Douglas, just as in other days, and always addressed Lady Ellaby as “Miss Sherwood,” with the same air of condescending patronage he had often shown her in other days.

Lord Ellaby travelled back several years of his life; he was in Brussels, in the midst of the old set. Lady Adelaide was the beauty of the day; Miss Sherwood was the governess; even little Dobson filled her obscure corner, and round him were gathered the fascinating Douglas, the old *roué* Annesley, and the other familiar faces. The timid literary lady, with her little vanities and great pretensions, was there too.

All this did not seem strange to him; it was just the world in which she lived herself. She would fain have left it for higher, holier ground, and sometimes she did succeed in rising a little on her clogged wing; but it soon drooped again, and she went back to the sad world of imagery, there to sit down, amid the sackcloth and ashes of the past.

The direction of all Lord Ellaby's affairs necessarily fell into the hands of Annie; and she proved a wise steward, as well as a faithful one, while, with the utmost scrupulosity, she avoided the self-appropriation of anything that was his. Her husband's children she watched over, and trained to something higher and better than their original character and earlier education had promised. They were not likely to display either shining talents or brilliant virtues, but they might be respectable members of society.

The Ellabys now constantly resided in the country, his Lordship's health requiring free air and retirement. Annie was his

assiduous and unwearying nurse. She had survived the proud feelings which would have made it painful to find herself seemingly placed in her old dependent position; and it was well she had; for she seldom entered Lord Ellaby's presence without being reminded of her supposed humble capacity. One day he said, "Miss Sherwood, be so good as to read some amusing book aloud to me; I dare say you can leave your school-room duties for an hour or two. By-the-bye, I hope you are pushing Walter on in his arithmetic; he was sadly deficient the last time I examined him. Lady Adelaide talks of making a change; I hope we may be able to avoid parting with you. You can begin to read; take a chair. Stay!—first write a note to Colonel Annesley, and tell him I shall be with him soon!" Annie shuddered when she heard those last words; and well she might shudder in listening to the words of the dying maniac, whose wild fancies had brought back the buried dead; and as she looked at him, she thought his words prophetic; he would probably soon be with

Colonel Annesley. Lord Ellaby's disease was supposed to be a softening of the brain; it was progressing with unusual rapidity. Daily it seemed that his faculties were diminishing in force; daily, too, his physical strength declined.

One of the dying visions of the unfortunate man was, that a dukedom had lately been conferred on him; he insisted on being styled "Your Grace." Not long after, he conceived the idea that he was Premier, having just received the seals of office, and was forming a strong Tory administration. Many a preferment did he bestow on his imaginary creatures and dependents. The Duchess, as he now termed Lady Adelaide, was in constant attendance on the Sovereign, he said, so she could not be much at home. Annie's reading,—her gentle voice, her kind assiduities,—soothed and pleased him. He told her one day he had asked the Duchess to raise her salary; he had no doubt she would do it!

But the end, the fearful end, of these earthly visions drew near. Lord Ellaby

wildly round. "Has not my wife come?" and his convulsed lips grew purple. "Why do you leave me alone? I have such fearful dreams when you leave me! Just now I dreamt they told me she had—my wife had eloped with Claude Douglas! How dared they say so! She does not love me, I know she does not; but her name is stainless as snow. And he, my friend Claude, was always *sans reproche*. No; I will never, never listen to a tale like that! What! Miss Sherwood here again! I do wish she would confine herself to the school-room. Perhaps she's lonely; well, let her stay!" Then fatigue overcame him; the wild eyes closed, and he remained some time silent.

Towards midnight, Lord Ellaby woke again, and a fearful joy overspread his pallid face. "You are come, you are come at last, my boy!—my boy! my beautiful boy! Ah, you have shot up strangely! You are above me; I look up to you. You have done great things, my dear boy! I am proud of you. You will be a great man some day, Sydney. I know it; I see it all



before me. My son! How proud I shall be to say, 'he is my son!' when his name is on every lip,—the Canning of the day, or greater still. How the House will ring with him! But 'tis a thorny path, Sydney," he added, sighing; "a thorny path, indeed!—one hour's home affection is worth it all. Mind how you marry, Sydney! Marry no one that does not love you! But what am I talking of? You must be loved; you have treasures to buy any heart—beauty, genius, all great gifts. Look at him," he continued, pointing to the imaginary shadow of his *lost* son. "Look at him,—how grand and beautiful he stands there! But he is going!—he is going!" he added, in a voice of alarm. "Stay, stay, Sydney! I will go with you. Ah, you have put out the lights! Bring a lamp, some one—quick! quick! I see him again! We are going together. His eyes gleam like fire—his cheeks are pale as ashes. More light, I say—more light; our way is dark!" And "The rich man also died, and was buried."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE Rectory at Wareham was a little Eden; and well it might be, for the pure spirits that dwelt there would have made an Eden of a wilderness.

Richard and Ellen are walking in an avenue of shady trees, with three fair children clinging round them, who look like bright reflections of their own calm happiness. The husband and wife are little altered, only that both look more thoughtful.

"Is not this blessed news?" said Ellen, dropping a few joyful tears. "Only to think that, after all, dear Annie is coming! I knew she would; I was sure she would, some day."

"Is Lady Ellaby coming, mamma?" asked the little girl, who held by Ellen's skirt.

"Don't call your aunt so, darling," said the mother, "she will not like it. She is Aunt Annie. A dear, loving aunt,—another

mamma. But who told you to call her Lady Ellaby?"

"Oh, nurse, mamma; she said I must call her so, and I fancy she thinks it a very pretty name, for she says it over as often as ever she can; I can't tell you how many times a day! 'What will Lady Ellaby say?' and other things like that. But she says, mamma, there are two rude, wicked boys coming with her, and that they'll be very cross, and take away all our playthings; but I wont let them—that I wont."

"Nurse has told you wrong, Annie. They are two poor boys, whose papa is dead, and they have no one to love and be kind to them but Aunt Annie."

"But hav'n't they a mamma of their own? all little boys and girls have. Why doesn't their own mamma take care of them?"

"They have no own mamma, dear."

"No! Oh, then she is dead. I shall ask them where she is buried, and if they cried a great deal, and if they go to put flowers on her grave."

"No, you must ask them none of these

things; but you must be very kind to them, and let them have your playthings if they like; but they are both great, big boys, and will not join your games much, I should think. Run, darlings, and gather all the cowslips you can to make a ball. Now, Richard," continued Ellen, as the children bounded away over the lawn, "let us read Annie's letter again."

"MY DEAR RICHARD AND ELLEN,—

"I shall soon be with you, if all is well; and I hope you will now find me, like the man in the gospel, 'clothed, and in *my* right mind.'

"You will have seen by the papers that poor Lord Ellaby is gone!—a melancholy end of a sad life. But for the unknown world, wherein talents are redemanded with interest, I should say, it was a blessed thing that the last days of his existence were so clouded as to let him live and die in delusion. His natural tendency being to worldly aggrandizement, he imagined himself raised to higher honours than he had ever contem-

plated, and sometimes he appeared so happy in the persuasion that he was a Duke, that I made every one humour his fancy. Oh, Ellen! it was so sad to hear him calling upon his guilty wife, so tenderly, in such entreating tones, it would have melted even her heart—even hers. He died fancying that Sydney stood by his bedside. I say fancying, but who can surely say that it was fancy? Who can say that he did not stand there,—that it was not his spirit that summoned his unhappy father away? At times, I think it was all reality. The impression on Lord Ellaby's mind was so vivid. He exclaimed, 'He is going! he is going! Stay, I will go with you!' Then called for more light—and died! Oh, Ellen, it was a fearful end! I am glad he forgot the misery and disgrace Lady Adelaide had brought on him. Poor Lord Ellaby was a sad instance of the perverting influence of an artificial world: he had many, many generous, noble qualities, but the world's pride marred his better nature. His children do not feel his loss as they should: he was indulgent in the ex-

treme, and tenderly attached to them. Their insensibility is very painful; but I suppose they inherit their mother's cold nature—certainly they have no portion of their father's heart!

“It was neither a matter of surprise nor regret to me to find, that from the day his mind first began to wander, he lost all sense of my position, and always fancied me ‘the governess,’ situated just as I had been under Lady Adelaide's harsh sway. I am glad it did not mortify me—very glad. The equanimity with which I took it, showed me I was coming to a right mind.

“You know, dear Ellen, that from the time of my illness, I had many doubts as to how far I was justified in continuing to bear his name, and to hold a position in the house of Lord Ellaby which unworthy motives first led me to assume; but I now feel that I did right and well to remain to the end, and to soften the sadness of his last days. But for me, he would have died alone; alone, except as far as hirelings were concerned; there was not even an old, attached

servant in the house. Yes, I am very glad I was with him! But it has been a great trial to me. Sydney's face, beautiful even in its defiant haughtiness, has for ever haunted me, and his last words have rung in my ears without ceasing. Dear boy, he was imperfect; but there was something so noble and daring in his very look—so much in him that seemed the embodiment of young genius! I loved him so much, even though he was her child! I can never tell you all I have lost in him.

“Ellen, you will rejoice with exceeding joy, even as the angels in Heaven rejoice over the sinner that repenteth, when I tell you, that the last spark of anger and resentment against that wretched woman is at last extinguished in my heart. I can even think of Claude now, with the calm regret that settles on a long-closed grave. I think—I even think I could meet him without one feeble palpitation of the heart that once only lived for him. But I must not boast. I will not think of him, except when I pray to be forgiven; and then his name, too, may

come upon my lips, for both have grievously erred. With him, too, it was the world!—the fear of the world's censure and derision kept him from the pure love that would have shielded him from the snares of the guilty and designing. But let his memory for ever rest in the ashes of my poor heart; he was its idol,—it is fitting that his name should be buried beneath its ruins.

“But I must not talk thus. I have made a sacred promise that I will not waste the remaining portion of my life in useless regrets. Perhaps years of real utility are before me. Heaven will point the path in which I am to walk. I feel something of my old energies springing up within me, and often repeat to myself Longfellow's glorious verse—

“ ‘Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints in the sands of time.’

“Forgive my incoherence, dear brother and sister.

“ I hope I shall be with you in one month from the date of this, to ask your forgiveness for the many hours’ uneasiness I have caused you, and to tell you something (all I cannot tell you) of my gratitude for your gentle patience and untiring love. I don’t think I shall ever be quite wretched again, though my days of jesting and laughter are over. The sad remembrance of the past will check my follies; and if the course I propose to myself does not atone for my sins, at least it shall testify of my repentance.

“ I feel that I am on the eve of some great change in life. I must consecrate it by solitude and devotion. I propose indulging myself with a solitary tour of one month in the Highlands. Heaven bless you both, in proportion to the love I bear you.

“ Your grateful and affectionate

“ANNIE.

“ Tell the dear old Doctor he must meet me at Wareham; I long to see him.

“ I have made my will. Poor Lord Ellaby’s fortune, which he left at my discretion, I have, of course, considered sacred

to his children; and as they have no near relations, I have made their guardianship to devolve on Richard, after me. I believe and hope he will accept the charge for my sake, as I cannot feel other than interested in Lord Ellaby's children, and dear Sydney's brothers.

“All that is really my own is to be divided between your children at my death, except a few legacies to old governess friends.”

CHAPTER XXII.

A low travelling carriage was slowly wending its way along a Highland road which passes through the beautiful Druhim. The road hangs over the river, which constantly rushes "foaming desperate, or else becomes dark like oblivion." Sometimes the water is almost black from its depth, and the shadow cast by the mountains clothed with pine woods. Here and there rise green, fantastic rocks, broken into every variety of shape, through whose fissures the river foams in showers of silver spray. Nothing can describe the surrounding scenery, except Shelley's line—

"Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise."

Perhaps none ever passed through the Druhim, without at least a transient elevation of mind, and feeling a momentary poetizing of their worldliness.

Lady Ellaby bent forward, and looked around her with such intense delight, that every speaking feature of her face became irradiated. She could not speak, so powerful was the emotion which filled her heart. She motioned to her servants to stop and open the carriage door; then stepping out, with all her old eagerness, she sat down near the edge of the precipice which overhung the river, and desired her attendants to drive on, and only return for her in an hour. The road was so extremely lonely, it was little probable that any one would obtrude on her solitary visions.

Annie was quite unconscious that she had chosen a position of extreme danger,—that one false step in rising, and she would sleep under the foaming waters that careered so wildly beneath. One of her servants observed her situation, and returned to entreat her to change it. She thanked him gently, moved a little, and then she was left alone with that sublime nature—alone with God !

At that moment a light silvery mist lay on the river and the green mountains facing

her; a cloud too was on the sun; but as it passed off, the light mist slowly began to curl up from the waters, thin, like a transparent curtain, and gradually curled up the sides of the hills, and finally rested, a crown of silver, on their summits, linking them to the sky.

It was like the unveiling of a sublime vision—a faint gleam of the ecstatic sight the rapt Apostle saw, when the veil of solemn mystery was withdrawn from the glories of the highest, and his privileged eye gazed on the beatitudes of Heaven. They were sublime thoughts that passed through the sorrow-worn mind of Lady Ellaby—so beautiful, so absorbing, that she forgot the scenes of trial she had lately passed through; utterly forgot the months and years of suffering that had marred her originally noble nature; the wrong, the revenge, the sin, the punishment it had entailed, all faded away like a past dream, and left her heart full of love and holy peace. And in that heart three images sat enshrined—the images of those she had loved the best—her sweet, unchanging sister;

her friend, not the Antonia of late years, but the loving, confiding, tender-hearted Antonia of long ago; and, deeper shrined than all, the image of her first, last, only love—not Lord Claude Douglas, a renegade from honour and high feeling, the guilty participator in an abhorred crime, but Claude, her own Claude, loving, faithful, tender, as on that blessed day in the greenwood, when it had seemed as if heaven's portals were opening to her, and that the heart must burst with over-joy, if one more grain of added happiness came to fill it. And the river flowed on with its eternal music, and the green trees bent down to meet it—the wind stirred their branches, and they made sweet music too, like the music that had sounded through the greenwood, far, far away, and long ago. And there was deep, silent music in the heavens above, and music, too, in that worn heart, as it brooded over its three precious treasures, and forgot, quite forgot, that two were gone from her for ever—one snatched away by foul sin, both by the world. And

she fancied she was reckoning up her safely shrined jewels, and smiled to think how undimmed they were. Oh, it was a blessed dream! a very blessed one! and it lasted longer than most pleasant dreams. And happy tears coursed down the pale cheeks so often washed by bitter ones. It is such joy to be at peace with all on earth—at peace with ourselves, at peace with Heaven—to have outlived resentment and forgotten wrong!

On the estate of Lord L—— is a wild, picturesque island, rocky, and covered with verdure. On every side the graceful weeping birch mingles with the shade of the dusky pines, and the oak which is interspersed gives name to the little isle.

Two men were wandering about Eilean A——, exploring its picturesque scenery, and talking over the fallen Stuarts, whose memories had been conjured up by some relics of Charles Edward which they had just been examining in the cottage on the island.

The one of the men who appeared the younger, wore the common sassenach dress; the other the kilted tartan of a noble clan, whose device is the bleeding heart. Both the explorers had poetical minds and vivid imaginations, but in the one, fancy was tempered by a deep and abiding melancholy. His was a beautiful face, most beautiful, but it bore something of the trace of a lost angel, something that told of a heaven forfeited—the rest a shadow!

“If Charles Edward had died on the field of Culloden!” said the younger.

“Ah!” responded his companion, “of how many may the sad ‘if’ be said—of obscure men as well as distinguished ones, perhaps! There are bright moments in the life of every man, when it had been well for him if he had died—moments which if he outlives, life becomes a desert, and he sinks into misery or nothingness! Waldo, this 18th of June is the happiest day—I mean the anniversary of the happiest day in my life! If I had died this day five years; if—but this is idle talk. Did you notice the two-

handed sword that hung over the mantel-shelf at the cottage? What a sinewy arm must have wielded it!"

"Mind your footing, Claude! you are walking like a blind man," said Waldo, linking his arm in that of his friend; and the two men passed on in silence. And they came slowly walking up the road by the precipice, stopping now and then to note the glorious scenery, or to give utterance to an impulsive expression of delight and surprise at the objects that met their gaze.

Lady Ellaby was still lost in dreams; she was not roused by the wayfarers' tread, till they came up to her, quite, quite close.

One word from a familiar voice struck on her ear, sounded through her heart, but it did not waken her from her visions; no, it was only the continuation of her happy dream, and mingled with its music.

"Claude! my own dear, dear Claude!" cried Annie, wildly, turning to him her face, radiant with love and joy. Claude heard the voice, the words; he rushed forward.

She stretched out her arms, and would have sprung to meet him; but the treacherous turf gave way, her foot slipped, and a moment later, the heart that had beat so high was sleeping beneath the wild, rushing waters of the Highland river.

Mortal heart never was assailed by a fiercer pang of anguish than Claude Douglas experienced in that moment. Uttering a wild cry, like that of a man struck with sudden frenzy, he would have blindly rushed over the precipice into the waters that had engulfed Annie, but a strong arm was thrown around him, forcibly withholding him from destruction.

"Leave me! leave me! What have I to live for?" cried Claude, ineffectually struggling to free himself from the clinging hold of his friend.

"To await your Maker's time! To redeem the past!" said Waldo, solemnly.

"She is not gone! she is not dead!" exclaimed Claude, more wildly than before.
"Let me go, Waldo! Unhand me, I say!

I see her! I see her! There—there! her white veil gleams yonder!”

“Impossible, Claude!”

“No, no! it is true! I am not raving—free me—I will be free! I see her yet! My God! my God! Let me save her!”

Still grasping Claude’s arm, the American approached the edge of the precipice; a sudden gleam of something like hope lit his face, but it faded away again, as he contemplated the depth beneath. There, indeed, fluttered a white object, a handkerchief or a veil, but so far below the spot from which Lady Ellaby had fallen, that if her remains rested there on some shelf of the rock, or on the thickly tangled shrubs, life had probably been extinguished in the rapid fall.

She is found! she is found!—snatched back as by a miracle to the sunlight! and in the wild joy of the rescue his own hand has wrought, Claude forgets that it is a lifeless burden he holds in his arms—a lifeless being on whom he calls with such passionate eagerness, to look up and answer him.

Years of sin and sorrow are effaced—Claude has gone back to his one, only sinless love, and she fills his arms and heart once more as in the happy past. Breathless, panting as much with joy as with exertion, he has regained a place of safety. Then slowly, surely, comes the sad conviction that Annie's ears are closed—closed for ever—to the passionate appeals of earthly love. Still holding the cold, inanimate form to his heart, vainly striving to infuse his own warm breath into the livid lips, Claude sinks with his burden on the earth. It was in that moment that Waldo discovered, what had escaped the agonized search of love, a faint pulse of life in Annie—so faint it scarcely could be discerned, yet it was there.

"Claude! Claude!" he whispered, eagerly, as if fearful to disturb the air with a sound, "rouse yourself! I think—I hope Lady Ellaby lives!"

"Who? what are you talking of?" asked Claude, distractedly.

"Of Annie! your Annie!" and a faint

struggling sigh came to confirm Waldo's words.

In an instant Claude passed from despair to delirious joy, and, but for Waldo's presence of mind, he might have been the means of extinguishing the little flame of life still lingering in Annie's bosom.

Happily, at that juncture, Lady Ellaby's servants returned with the carriage. The inanimate form of Annie was lifted into the conveyance, still supported in the arms of Claude, who would not relinquish his charge. By degrees some heat was communicated to the passive frame; but Lady Ellaby continued insensible, only now and then uttering a low sigh. Strange to say, no immersion had taken place, the fall having suddenly been arrested by some thick bushes of genista.

Long did Claude Douglas watch over Annie, more loved, more fondly loved than ever, only with the despairing passion that sees no hope, admits of no future, but gazes at its object across an impassable gulf.

The invalid was lying at a little inn in the inconsiderable town of Dingwall. Her dreams were sweet and pleasant; they were all of Claude, dear Claude! He was for ever in her sight; the young romance of her existence had come back to her, with all its stainless glory. Annie was too happy for mortality, only sometimes she dropped a few quiet tears on the hand in which hers rested, and asked forgiveness for having fancied Claude unfaithful! *Now* she knew how true he had been to her all the time she had doubted him! Only would he take her forth from that dark, close room to the greenwood, where they had spent a June day together, listening to the music of the leaves and the music of their own hearts!

But the fever dreams passed away, and Annie awoke to reality; awoke and found Claude really by her side, humble, penitent, almost purified from the past even, by suffering and remorse; and when the hour of parting came, they went their several ways reconciled to each other, reconciled to life, and forgiven of Heaven. "You shall

hear of me again, Annie," said Claude; "you shall hear of me again, but without dishonour! I will live to win back the name I have forfeited."

Annie turned again into the battle of life, serenely strong—hopeful as those can only be who walk on earth with eyes fixed on heaven, gathering love and strength there to strive below; who better than she had learnt to

"Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong?"

Claude Douglas died with honour on that fatal but glorious day, when—

"Into the valley of death
Rode the six hundred."

THE END.

LONDON :
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS, CHANCERY STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.





10

1



